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ARGOSY

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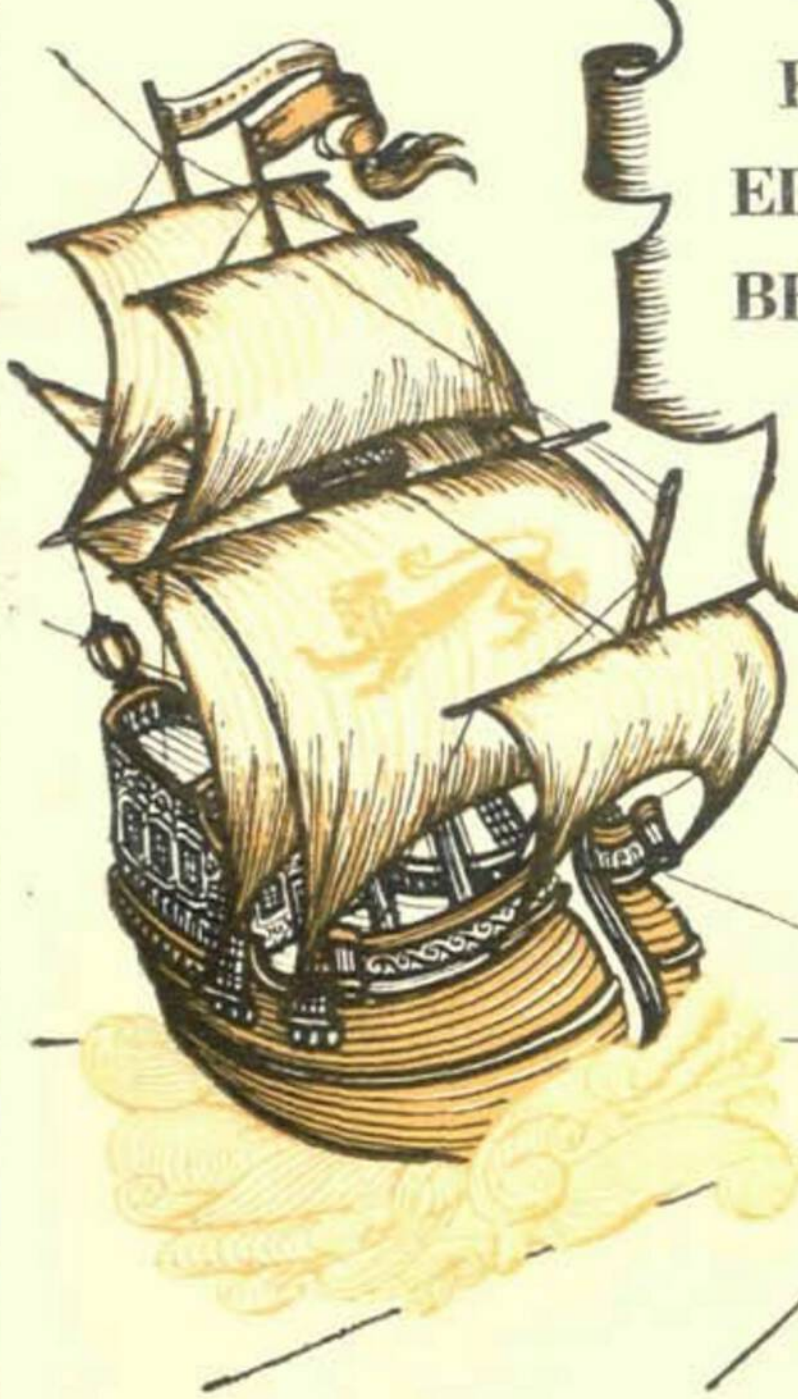

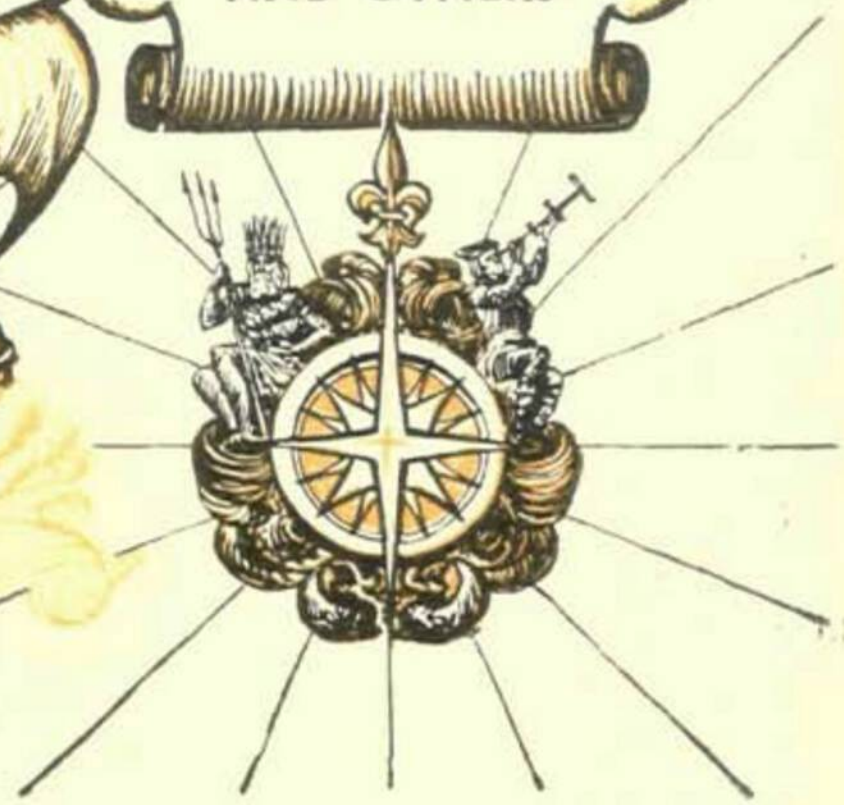

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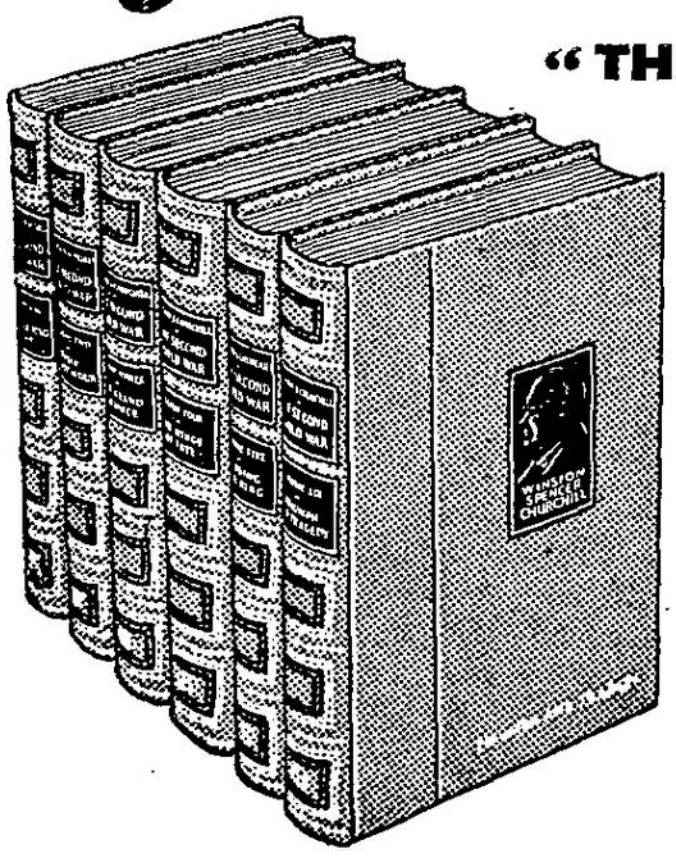

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ARGOSY

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Tinker Man

O DRINK your porter, tinker man,
And wipe your creamy mouth,
The dust is white upon the roads,
The wind red from the south,
And where's the sense in footing fast
When your throat's on fire with drouth?

Come, perch upon the barrel's edge
And slug the porter down,
We'll swop tales of the tinker men,
With women lean and brown,
Who sing the roads when old King Puck
Reigns in Killorglin town.

SIGERSON CLIFFORD

BY A SHORT HEAD

"'Ave a fourpenny one, and see London town," said the bus conductor

by GERARD NEWTON

WHERE, when, and how Wontoo came aboard the *Eleanor* no one knew. There he was, peeling potatoes with speed and accuracy, smiling in a friendly way on all and sundry as though he had been there all his life. Torpy, the cook, was not sure and, questioned by the mate, had said that he had always been there.

When the great winds blew, when green water thumped on the deck and freezing spindrift lashed it with hisses of hate, Wontoo would strip to his brown, pimply hide, and the officer on the bridge would find a grinning face and a can of hot cocoa or coffee materializing over the canvas dodger.

Wontoo would return to the galley, dripping and shivering, but would quickly evaporate dry, warm up, and be ready for another dash through the elements. Where and when he slept was a mystery; he received no orders, but anticipated them, while his grin displayed continuously his filed teeth.

The *Eleanor* duly reached the London docks. There were too many faces about now, surly faces, ugly faces; so Wontoo proceeded ashore by running down a momentarily taut hauser. Outside the dock he came to a mighty road containing uncountable humans, most of them smelly, and rushing vehicles of enormous size making more noise than fifty ships unloading at once.

A big red bus rolled to a stop right in front of him, two seamen got aboard, and a friendly-looking man, who was surely the captain, beckoned to him. Wontoo scrambled inside as directed, only to roll on his back with his feet in the air as the monster jerked into action. Everyone was laughing, so Wontoo joined in; assisted by the captain, he took a plush seat and sat, all but dislocating his neck trying to see all the wonders that flashed by the large, shining windows.

"Where d'you want, mate?" asked the conductor.

"Wontoo, sir," he said, touching his cap.

"Not on the me-an-you today, chum. Got any money—these things?" the conductor asked, spreading a palm full of coppers.

Wontoo displayed a brown fistful of all his worldly wealth, which was considerable.

"Blimey, I can see that saying ta-ta to you, chum. Look 'ere." He rolled all the sterling, dollars, pesos, and what not, fastened them with a rubber band, and indicated their future location somewhere inside Wontoo's jacket; he took a small white coin and gave two large brown ones and a paper ticket in exchange. "'Ave a fourpenny one and see London town."

Wontoo was hustled off the bus in Commercial Road, along which he strolled in the bright September sun until a shop full of the most lovely clothes caught his eye.

His mind wandered over the materials—brown, green with a white stripe, pale mauve with a pink stripe, and pure, bright blue. He peered into the shop and saw a little man with a long nose prancing round a tall negro who was admiring himself in a light-brown-and-yellow check with spiv shoulders.

The negro laughed at the little man, grabbed Wontoo by the neck, and added him to the admiring audience: then the negro proceeded to rig Wontoo out in reddish-brown sackcloth, light yellow shoes, and a brown bowler.

Delighted with his efforts, the negro then started the financial battle, in which the little man with the long nose seemed to be in his element. Words, impolite and otherwise, filled the air; warfare was threatened, accepted, and postponed. Notes were slammed on the counter and rejected with scorn, and Wontoo, joining in, added the bus ticket to his little pile and drew his eighteen-inch shark knife. The war finished as quickly as it had begun.

Came a white shop with appetizing eats in the window and a smell of "cawfey" every time the door swung. Wontoo stood, trying to get the drill. A friendly goddess gave him a silver tray, propelled him past many holes and cupboards, some hot and some cold, and otherwise helped him to present to the bewildered cashier the most wonderful collection of food it had been her lot to estimate. On leaving, full and happy, he was relieved of the silver tray and other equipment by the friendly goddess, who had evidently anticipated just such a lapse.

He strolled on, sometimes entering buildings on the heels of others; at other times, unlike Omar Khayyám, he found himself coming out of some other door than that wherein he went. The biggest buildings fascinated him most but he tried all kinds; the Stock Exchange, the Bank of England, and the Mansion House were definitely hostile, but banks and insurance offices took no notice—at least ostensibly. In St. Paul's he sat and digested comfortably, belching the while, but even here the

natty brown bowler was snatched from his head by a vulture-like man entirely devoid of friendliness.

Presently another temple complete with sacred pigeons loomed behind the highest railings he had ever seen. Two small gates were the only ingress to the mighty courtyard within and the wide steps. Here must be the home of the most mighty god of all. He stood wistfully wondering if immediate death would follow entrance, until a little lady pushed him past the guardian in the high hat, who took no notice whatever.

Within were glass cases containing all kinds of oddments—mostly uninteresting; but here and there was a bloodthirsty-looking weapon which delighted his imagination. They became more familiar; a canoe with paddles such as he had once owned, pictures of men and women just like himself, only not so beautifully arrayed.

There were tools for pleasant murdering, at which he was an accepted expert; and there, on an upper shelf, a row of little preserved heads, one of which was undoubtedly of his own workmanship! It had been stolen from him by a white man just after completion, the best he had ever done.

Wontoo swore filthy oaths in many tongues and dialects; he danced and waved his arms and generally behaved as no one had previously done in the British Museum. Drowsy custodians arose at the call of duty; people gathered and got in the way as usual, but he was not cast forth. Instead he was conducted farther within, doubtless to torture and to death, but he went with head up and unafraid.

A Great One, wise and ancient, regarded him in a not unfriendly manner and questioned him in many languages, some of which were vaguely familiar; others came and spoke in other tongues, but all were at a loss to discover the cause of his excitement. Of course, no one tried English.

Came a large man in blue, who listened and spoke his piece: "Says he done it. It's his second wife who he chopped in the dark by mistake, and he wants it back, whatever it is. I've met his lingo in one of those South Pacific islands."

Long and hot was the discussion, and it lasted well beyond closing-time, but a final agreement was reached for an exchange, a head for a head, the crafty British realizing that time, tide, accidents, pestilence, earthquake, and sharks were all on their side.

Wontoo departed to find the *Eleanor* by taking the first bus going east, offering a fistful of change and taking the next that came along after he had been evicted. At Chingford it seemed that he had come to a dead end.

He was hungry and night was coming on. The smell of food was universal to one whose nose, though flat and as shapeless as putty, was highly efficient. Nothing was easier than to trace down an errant whiff of cooking to some kitchen with an open window.

A steak pie, large enough for four, and two bottles of beer looked good; there was no evidence that they were not displayed for himself alone.

Wontoo acted on the obvious assumption and melted away with his spoil to the north, thus finding Epping Forest. As a forest he could see that it was nothing to write home about, but it held a certain security of which he was well able to take advantage. The pie and beer being surrounded by little brown man, he found a comfortable fork in a large oak and slept, until annoyed by an angry female voice.

A woman with yellow hair was giving a commentary on her male companion's disgraceful acts. They stood immediately below the tree with the listener above who—had he but known it—was informed that if the swine did not do the right thing *by* her after all he had done *to* her, it would not be her fault if he never did it to anyone else.

The man saw one of the beer bottles, retrieved it, and deliberately, unemotionally, blopped her on the head with it, much to the admiration of the expert above. Then, after wiping the bottle on her skirt, he moved out of the picture.

The *Eleanor* went into dry dock for a long-overdue refit. The citizens of Chingford organized night patrols to catch the food-thief who left the dirty dishes scattered all over the forest, and the police spent hours hunting the invisible man who lit small smoky fires all day and night, to which they were particularly allergic during a hot September.

It was two-thirty, overpoweringly hot, and the Great One of the British Museum was trying—be it recorded to his credit—to keep his eyes open. The after-midday snooze for the over-sixties must be rooted far back in man's evolution; it was probably Nature's way of removing the aged when she had finished with them; they fell out of the tree or gave the younger man his chance.

The Great One jerked to full attention to find a grinning brown face floating above a brown-paper parcel, having passed through the hitherto-impregnable defences. He registered alertness, amazement, annoyance, and how-did-you-get-hereness—in that order.

" Me bring head, swapannudderone."

The G.O. stretched forth hands to grasp the parcel, only to find it snatched from his reach. His finger found a bell-push, and there entered a lady of many summers spent, as was evident, in some dehydrating climate. She smiled at Wontoo as all must who have a heart in the right place.

"Find the Deputy-Sub-Under-Assistant of Polynesian Ethnology and ask him to bring the preserved head we were discussing recently."

There followed a fidgety, mutually suspicious silence during which Wontoo produced a rush bag that needed no introduction as a present from Billingsgate.

Enter the D.-S.-U.-A.-P.-E., accompanied by exhibit P.U. 14169, at the sight of which Wontoo's eyes shone with recognition and glad welcome.

The exhibit was placed on the desk, parcel advanced to meet it, little brown man was gone.

Time elapsed: 1.63 seconds.

The G.O. depressed a switch, bells rang and kept on ringing, red lights shone, doors slammed and remained at the slam, the outer gate shut right in the face of T.O. Longpeg, Col. (Ret.) who returned to his club with something to grouse about at last.

The little brown man was through the glass door as it shut with a clearance of .003 inches, and he fled down the steps, touching one in ten, avoided the clumsy approach of the gatekeeper, and was up and over the mighty railings like a cat with two dogs on its tail.

Calculations based on telephonic communications convinced the G.O. that he was by now entering Brighton.

"Seems he had something on his conscience, sir, but he has kept his bargain. Why not look?"

"You open it, Jones."

"Oh, how beautiful, sir! That fair hair, marcel-waved and going brown at the parting, those lip stitches, blue cotton and brown wool. And look, sir, the skin is quite fair, blonde in fact."

"And its origin, Jones? Can we exhibit it?"

"I see what you mean, sir, recent manufacture, source of material local and perhaps lamented; but it's too good to lose."

"Scotland Yard, Jones, and quickly, before he gets out of the country. We may also get the other one back."

The *Eleanor* was creeping and booing her way down the Channel through a drifting, patchy fog in company with too many others all showing their anxiety and absence of radar by emitting a variety of noises.

"Seen anything of Wontoo?" asked the captain.

"No, and I shall miss the cheerful little blighter—could do with some hot coffee right now," answered the first officer.

"Me got cocoa," said the richest and most contented little man in the whole world.

He had his wife, somewhat abbreviated, nice clothes, and an amazing assortment of memories.

★ ★ ★

SPRING POSY

"He saw the flowers in all the lovely ladies' hair, and he just sat and smelled." And that was the extent of Ferdinand the Bull's interest in botany; but you, of course, will be able to identify the specimens collected below. Count one point for recognizing the flower, one for its literary habitat, and one for the author, making a total of twenty-four. The answers are on page 61.

1. *When we've little warmth or none, it spreads its glossy breast and tells tales about the sun.*

2. *So banal, it seemed, to exchange these white masses of flowers for a lot of bungalows—and ninety thousand roubles.*

3. *She wanted the little yellow herb as a souvenir of Derry's Wood, but her fellow trespasser—she could not believe that he really owned the land—quoted "Hamlet" to her and told her to throw it away.*

4. *Ah, drops of gold in whitening flame*
Burning, we know your lovely name—

5. *There's manners f'yer! And two bunches of fragrant flowers are trodden into the mud, leaving a flower-girl with a grievance.*

6. *Who but a woman could have stood salad for six weeks, even salad sanctified by the presence and scent of those gorgeous bushes—which the Man of Wrath suggested might advantageously be pruned?*

7. *Under a benign sky the moths flutter among these fragile blue flowers that symbolize the peaceful slumbers of three once-turbulent spirits.*

8. *Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower seem golden petals in an English meadow to an exile dreaming of spring at home.*

SECRET MESSAGE

The boy and his dog followed where the jet engines whined and roared

by C. H. GIBBS-SMITH

ADAM did not care much for aeroplanes. He preferred watching the birds; or better still, searching the hedgerows near the village for the strange and familiar insects which fascinated him. But aeroplanes did not worry him any more, for seven of his eight years had been spent in the Essex countryside on the borders of a large airfield, and he was familiar with its sights and sounds.

On this hot summer's afternoon, with the sun pouring down from a clear sky, Adam was intent on watching a big grasshopper, and occasionally giving him a friendly prod—with a blade of grass—to watch him hop. Now and again he raised his head to make sure that Jones did not stray too far: after all, he was not much more than a puppy, and had to be looked after until he was a big dog. When that time came, thought Adam, Jones would have to look after him.

At first he paid no attention to the roar which seemed to be approaching him from beyond the screen of Farmer Larkin's poplars. But just as he began to think this aeroplane was rather lower than usual and would frighten the birds who sat dotted about in the shade of the foliage, the machine burst through the tops of the trees and thundered right over his head.

Adam was not frightened; he was angry. He had once or twice stood out beyond the end of the runway, and with mild curiosity watched the returning fighters come skimming in to land, with their screaming jets leaving in the air a stench of burnt kerosene which tickled his nose.

But this was different. The pilot shouldn't come crashing through his trees, scattering the birds, and showering leaves and twigs all over the field. For Adam did not realize until a moment later that the airman was in trouble, and had not meant to injure the trees or disturb the birds.

It was the sudden din of grinding metal over beyond the hedge and the sudden silence following it, that told him. For an instant he stood still, hearing only the yammer of the birds and the jerky barking of Jones. He turned and ran in the direction of the

noise, calling out to Jones to come to heel. He found a narrow gap in the hedge, crawled through it on all fours, and stood up on the other side, panting and red in the face.

In the middle of the field before him was the wreckage of the aeroplane, lying at the end of a torrent of churned-up earth and weeds. A cloud of brown dust, iridescent in the sunlight, was already settling over the scene as Adam started to run again; slower this time, for the broken ground made hard going for his small legs, and he was nearly out of breath.

He stopped some yards from the remains of the machine, wondering where the pilot would be. The heat from the buckled and silenced engines shimmered against the dust. The thing suggested to him a giant trap in which he knew there was an animal —an animal to be rescued. He caught sight of the red, white, and blue flash on the battered fin, and stumbled up to the other end of the wreckage. There he found the nose of the narrow fuselage half buried in earth, and cracked open like an egg.

Adam was oppressed by the heavy silence around him, and began to feel a little sick at the smell of the kerosene that dripped from the ruptured tanks. He moved close to the wreckage, stood on tiptoe, and was just able to look into the cockpit.

The pilot seemed to be half sitting, half kneeling, with his head bowed down like men Adam had seen praying in church. He's dead, thought Adam, so it's too late; but I can't go away and leave him all alone. Adam saw one of the steps recessed into the fuselage, so he put a foot into it and pulled himself up.

As he stared down at the crouching figure, he felt an overwhelming sadness, just as he had felt once before when he saw the farmer's brown spaniel run over in the village. He reached out and touched the pilot's helmet and slid both hands over the smooth leather. He found a hold on the two built-in earphones, and very gently pulled back the head, making a cushion for it as best he could with his arms.

Adam bent down and peered into the man's face, and was surprised to see the eyelids quiver. The pilot was not dead, after all; but he looked very pale and tired.

" Are you hurt? " said Adam.

There was no answer, and he asked again, " Please—are you hurt? "

The eyes opened this time, and the lips moved; but no sound came from them.

" I can't hear you," said Adam. He began to be aware of his heart beating fast. The feeling of sadness changed to anxiety. He did not know what to do, except hold the man's head in his arms and wait.

He searched the face that lay so close to his own, and asked again, louder and more urgently: " Please—are you hurt? "

The pilot seemed then to hear him, and slowly turned his eyes until they rested on Adam's face. His lips moved again, but this time he spoke: " Tell her," he whispered, " tell her—the cow jumped over the moon."

" That's silly," said Adam, almost crossly.

For a little while they looked at one another in silence. Then the man smiled and closed his eyes. Soon there was no smile left, and the head felt very heavy to Adam, and he realized he could hold it no longer. The warm leather slipped away from his fingers and the head fell forward with a thud on the instrument panel. The only sound after that was the tinkling of glass splinters on the cockpit floor.

As Adam looked down at the pilot—sure now that he was dead —he heard voices in the distance, followed by the sound of men breaking through the hedge.

The voices came nearer, and one man started to shout: " Hey, you there, sonny, get away from that plane! Get away! Can't you hear? Get away—it may catch fire any minute."

Adam got down unhurriedly from his foothold and started walking away from the aircraft. He saw the men strung out across the field, running as best they could over the broken surface. Adam felt rather dreamy as he walked, until he heard Jones barking and saw him running and jumping over the lumps of brown earth.

" Where have you been? " he said, without thinking, as he lifted Jones off the ground to let him lick his face. Then he remembered the smell of the fuel. " I suppose you didn't like the nasty smell, you poor dog."

He was now only dimly aware of the sounds behind him; of some more words about fire and danger; of the noise of the men scrambling over the machine, telling one another to be careful with the pilot; and of one voice saying, " The poor blighter's had it."

Adam did not look back. He put Jones down, took a long piece of string from his pocket, and looped it through Jones's collar—or rather through the circle of cleverly plaited string which his grandfather had made to save money. Then he walked back across the fields to the cottage where he lived with the old man; and he was glad to be home.

It was not until he lay in bed that night, listening to Jones breathing at the end of the bed and to his grandfather pottering about downstairs, that Adam thought much about the pilot and

the nursery rhyme. He had told his grandfather about the crash, but not about the pilot's message. Somehow it seemed like a secret which must be kept between them until he found " Her."

" Her," of course, was a woman. Adam did not know many women. His mother—and father—had been killed by a bomb when he was a baby. But there were the village women who sometimes said a few words to him, and he remembered one of them whispering to a friend, " What a funny, solemn little fellow he is, just like an old man; " which had made him proud, because they must have meant he was like his grandfather, of whom he was very fond.

There was Mrs. Watson who kept the shop; she was nice. And, of course, his schoolteacher, Miss Halley, whom he greatly admired because she knew all about insects—especially ants—and encouraged him to look for them.

Then there were the women he had heard called " ladies "—he had met two of them: the Vicar's wife, who puzzled him by knowing so little about gardens on the two or three occasions they had spoken; and someone his grandfather had called a " tourist," who had interrupted him when watching the ants in the churchyard, and given him sixpence.

On the whole—he did not know why—Adam concluded that " Her " was a lady. He began to forget that the message was silly, and only to remember that it was a message; and messages had to be delivered to people. Then he fell asleep.

Next morning his grandfather gave him twopence to buy his weekly lollipop, and he set out with Jones to the village shop. During the holidays he always went on Saturday mornings, because his favourite sort of lollipop was often on sale if he arrived before dinner.

Today was as hot and sultry as yesterday, and Adam dawdled towards the red brick building which housed not only the lollipops but also a large selection of useful objects which he always liked to examine. He particularly admired a red collar and lead which his grandfather said was much too dear to buy for Jones. So he had given up any hope of that; but there was no harm in looking at it.

He pulled Jones past Mrs. Watson's cat, who always swore at Jones, and went up the steps. The door of the shop was open, and as he went inside he could hear Mrs. Watson talking to another woman. They were hidden by an array of brooms and brushes set up inside the entrance.

"And only married a year," the other woman was saying. " It's terrible, it is. Poor thing—and him such a handsome man, too."

Then Mrs. Watson's reply: " Yes, Jim Baker says she's taking

it awful hard, poor lady; but that's what you get for marrying into the Air Force, I always say. You never can tell when those aeroplanes are going to explode and kill somebody."

At this point Mrs. Watson's tabby appeared and Jones began barking at him. Mrs. Watson came out from behind her wares.

"Oh, it's you, Adam, is it?" she said. "Come for your lollipop? I've got some of the pink ones you like—just in today." She went behind the counter and took one of the sweets out of a large jar.

As Adam reached up with his pennies, the other woman caught sight of Jones. "What a funny, ugly little dog," she exclaimed. "What is his name?"

Adam took his lollipop, looked up at the woman, and said, "He's not ugly and he's not funny. My grandfather says he is a mongrel, and that means mixed. I shan't tell you his name—" then, as an afterthought—"and mongrels are always clever." He thought the woman was very silly.

"Oh dear," said the woman to Mrs. Watson, "I've offended him, and I really didn't mean to."

Adam disregarded this apology, and was glad Mrs. Watson made no answer, for something important had just then occurred to him. "Please, Mrs. Watson," he said, "what was the pilot called?"

"What pilot?" she asked, and then seemed to realize what he meant. "Oh, you mean the one that had the accident? But how did you know about that, Adam?"

"I saw the aeroplane," said Adam. "He was dead."

Mrs. Watson let out an exclamation of surprise. "How terrible!" she said. "But you mustn't think about such things, Adam. Does your grandfather know you saw it?"

"But what was he called?" insisted Adam.

"His name was Harvey—but I can't think what you want to know for."

Adam pulled Jones down the steps, past the hissing tabby and into the sultry village street. He wanted to get away from those two women as fast as he could, and think. As he turned down the lane past the old church, he had come to a conclusion, and a decision.

If Mr. Harvey was married, Mrs. Harvey must be the "Her" of the message; so he must deliver the message to her, no matter how silly it sounded. Mrs. Watson had called her a lady, too, so he had been right about that. He imagined also that Mrs. Harvey must live somewhere near the airfield.

When he reached home, he went in search of his grandfather and found him sitting in the garden.

" Grandfather," he said, " please get down the tub. I want to give Jones a bath."

The old man laughed. " Why, of course, my son, but why does Jones need a going-over today? "

Adam did not like telling lies, but he couldn't tell the truth: " He looks so dirty: I'm ashamed of him when I go along the street." He hoped Jones would forgive this betrayal, but he couldn't think of any other excuse.

He was very glad to see his grandfather get up without more questions and go into the little outhouse. Soon he emerged with the tub and placed it under the apple tree. Adam then carried out jugfuls of water until there was enough in the tub. Then he had to look for Jones, who must have known what was in store for him, for he was finally run to earth under Adam's bed.

" Don't be stupid, Jones," said Adam, as he carried him downstairs, " you must be a clean dog if you're going to meet a lady."

So the reluctant Jones was bathed, and Adam told his grandfather he was going to look for grasshoppers again after dinner. That was a lie; but not, Adam felt, a serious one.

Adam thought he remembered where the airfield entrance was; right round on the other side, and almost in the neighbouring village of Turleigh. To get there he would have to go through his own village and follow the main road that ran north at the signpost.

It was just when he was passing Mrs. Watson's shop that he chanced to look down at Jones, and realized how old and shabby his string lead was. He was suddenly ashamed of the old piece of string, now that Jones himself looked so clean. The collar looked old, too, but Jones's hair hid most of that. So he turned up the path and went into the shop.

" Oh, it's you again, Adam, is it? " said Mrs. Watson, and Adam was glad she did not seem angry. He had wondered if he had upset her this morning.

" Mrs. Watson," he said as a precaution. " I'm sorry I was rude this morning."

" Bless your heart, you weren't rude. I thought it served Mrs. Baynes right when you spoke up for Jones. Don't you ever let anyone insult your dog, Adam. He's a real person, just like the rest of us."

He liked Mrs. Watson for that. So he asked: " May I have a piece of new string, please? I haven't any money to pay for it—" he paused—" and—Mrs. Watson—could it be a piece of red string? "

" And what would you want with red string? "

" I've just given Jones a bath, and his lead is dirty. I think he would look nice with a new red lead, don't you? "

Mrs. Watson peered over the counter and looked down at Jones, who sat, still damp, with one ear turned inside out.

" Well, I think we can manage that," she laughed, and turned to rummage in a tall cupboard. She stood up holding a large ball of bright red string, and measured off a long length; then she cut it in half.

" There's enough for two," she said, handing it over.

Adam put one piece in his pocket, and fixed the other to Jones's collar.

" Thank you very much, Mrs. Watson. It is very kind of you," he said, wanting to show his gratitude in more than ordinary words, but not knowing which words to use.

It was a long and noisy walk to Turleigh, and Adam dared not let Jones off the lead for fear of the traffic. In half an hour they were almost there, and Adam sat down by the roadside to rest. The hard road, dusty and hot, had made him tired; and he also wanted to tidy up Jones. This he did by taking out a piece of broken comb from his pocket and carefully raking over his companion, to the accompaniment of occasional yelps when the prongs met some knotted hair.

When they arrived at the entrance to the airfield, Adam stopped and looked about him. He was surprised at there not being a grand stone gateway, and for a moment thought he had come to the wrong place. But he saw a man in R.A.F. uniform and went up to him.

" What can we do for you, Jimmy? " said the tall R.A.F. Police Corporal, bending down to look at him.

Adam didn't much like being called Jimmy. " I want to see Mrs. Harvey, please."

" And who would Mrs. Harvey be? "

Adam feared for a moment that his long journey was all for nothing. " She's the wife of the pilot," he said, and then, as if not wanting to voice the words, " the dead pilot."

The Corporal stopped smiling and straightened. " Oh, that Mrs. Harvey," he said severely. " And why would you be wanting to see her, son? "

" I must see her, please," insisted Adam.

The Corporal hesitated, looking doubtfully at Adam, and then turned away. " Wait there, son," he said over his shoulder.

After a minute or two he came back with another man.

" I didn't like to go too far, Sergeant," he was saying, " seeing it was to do with the Wing Commander's widow. I can't make the kid out."

"That's a fine dog you have there," stated the Sergeant when he reached Adam. "And what a smart lead, too. My friend here says you want to see Mrs. Harvey. Now, Mrs. Harvey is not very well today. She may not want to see little boys. Why do you want to see her?"

The compliment to Jones was almost forgotten by the intrusion of this new obstacle. So he simply repeated: "I must see her, please," and added, "it is very important."

"It's no good, Sergeant; he'll go on saying that till the cows come home. There's something funny about this, I'll bet."

Adam wondered what this new reference to cows might mean.

The Sergeant remarked out loud that he, too, thought there was something funny about it. "Well," he said, finally, "come along inside and we'll see."

Once in the Guard Room, he picked up the telephone. "Give me the Adjutant, will you, miss? . . . Oh sir, I'm sorry to worry you—Sergeant Noakes on the gate here—but I have a little boy here who insists he must see Mrs. Harvey. I can't get anything out of him, sir . . . No, seems a nice little boy . . . Yes, thank you, sir, I'll bring him along."

Then he turned to Adam. "Well, sonny, you are going to see one of the officers—he's called the Adjutant. Perhaps he'll be able to do something for you."

Adam didn't mind whom he saw so long as they took him to Mrs. Harvey. So he led Jones out of the hut and followed the Sergeant, first along a road, then through a little wood, and finally along a path between high privet hedges.

The whine and roar of jet engines had been growing louder. Soon they emerged on the fringe of the airfield and were now nearly deafened by the noise. They passed a row of blue-grey aeroplanes which Adam thought looked like lizards or dragons; then some whitewashed buildings appeared to their left and, beyond them, their destination. A large notice said STATION HEADQUARTERS. The Sergeant pushed open the door and held it for Adam.

The next few minutes were very confusing for Adam and Jones. As they waited in a stuffy corridor, a succession of airmen and airwomen passed by. Some looked cross, some looked happy, and some even stopped to pat Jones and ask his name. Then the Sergeant came out of a room and stood by the window, whistling.

Soon an officer came out and spoke to him: "I decided it was best to get straight on to the Group Captain, Sergeant. I'm glad to say he's going to see the boy himself. So you can leave him with me now. Where is he, by the way?"

The Sergeant nodded towards Adam and Jones. Jones at that moment was receiving a lot of attention from two W.R.A.F. officers. The Adjutant came up to the group and greeted them. Then he bent down and spoke to Adam.

"What is your name, my boy?" said the Adjutant.

"I'm Adam and this is Jones," said Adam, and pointed to Jones, who was now in the arms of one of the W.R.A.F. officers and apparently enjoying it. They all laughed, which made Adam cross. But he didn't dislike these people, for all that. They seemed a friendly lot. But he wanted to see Mrs. Harvey.

Adam wondered again why it was so difficult to reach her, especially when everybody knew who she was. There must be some reason why they all made it so hard for him.

Suddenly, as he looked up at the faces surrounding him, a thought struck him. Mrs. Harvey must be so unhappy that all these people were trying to protect her. The idea made him able to bear the delay more easily. But he must tell them he meant no harm to her.

"Well, Mr. Adam and Mr. Jones," said the Adjutant, "you must now come along the passage and see the Group Captain—that's the big man who orders all of us about here. Nothing to be frightened of—he's a very nice man, and you can tell him all about why you want to see Mrs. Harvey."

Adam was not frightened of any big man, but he would not repeat the message to him or anyone else—except, of course, "Her."

He looked up at the great bulk of the Group Captain and, still higher, at the large friendly face above it. On the broad chest were white wings and three rows of highly coloured ribbons, and lying on the desk nearby was a cap sparkling with gold braid.

The Group Captain held out his hand and said, "Hullo, young man," and as Adam reached up and took as much of the hand as he could grasp, he could not help feeling confidence in this uniformed giant.

So he started straight away: "I don't want to hurt Mrs. Harvey," he said. "I only want to see her—to tell her something." And then added hastily what he remembered he should have said at the beginning, "I'm Adam and "—pointing towards the floor—"this is Jones."

The Group Captain looked down and laughed; Adam looked down too. Jones was not there. He had walked round and sat down on the other side of his master, winding the red string round Adam's legs. Adam smiled for the first time that day.

"Well, Adam, let us sit down over there, shall we?"

They went across to a row of chairs by the wall. Adam lifted Jones onto one of the chairs and perched himself on another.

The Group Captain sat down and leaned forward, resting his arms across his knees. He turned his head to look at Adam. "Adam," he said, "I want to tell you that Mrs. Harvey is very unhappy. She doesn't want to talk to people unless it's very important. Do you think you could trust me enough to tell me why you want to see her?"

Adam certainly felt he could trust him, but only far enough to tell him why it was important to see Mrs. Harvey. "I have a message for her."

"A message? A message from whom?"

"From the pilot," said Adam. The Group Captain frowned almost as if he were angry, and looked away from Adam. When he spoke again his voice was not very friendly. "Which pilot, Adam?"

"Mr. Harvey—he was in the aeroplane yesterday."

"But Mr. Harvey was killed, Adam. How could he have given you a message?" He still did not look round; but the voice was friendly again.

"Jones and I found the aeroplane first. I climbed onto it and spoke to the pilot. He gave me the message."

The Group Captain said nothing for a moment, but stared across the room and out of the window. Adam wondered why he looked so far away and did not say anything. He felt for Jones with his right hand, and began to stroke him. The room was very hot and Jones began to pant with his tongue hanging out.

Without taking his eyes from the window, the Group Captain said very quietly: "Adam, I'm sure you would never tell a lie; and I'm also sure that a person who likes dogs would never be cruel to anyone—especially anyone who is unhappy. Now, I don't want you to tell me what the actual message was—that's your secret which you must tell only to Mrs. Harvey. But I want you to describe a little about how you found the aeroplane—just so that I can be quite sure it was really Mr. Harvey you spoke to, and not another pilot. Will you tell me what you saw, Adam?"

Adam liked this man. He couldn't make out why he was asking all these questions, but he didn't mind talking to him so long as it meant seeing Mrs. Harvey in the end.

"The aeroplane came right through the trees," he said, "and frightened the birds, and went into the next field. I know it didn't mean to frighten the birds. So I ran into the field to look for it. There was a lot of dust, and I ran on to see if the pilot was hurt. I couldn't see where he was at first—"

"How do you mean?"

" It was all so broken. But I saw the colours on the tail, red, white, and blue, and that meant the pilot was the other end. I found him there. He looked dead."

" What did you do when you found him? Did you touch anything, Adam? "

Adam was becoming puzzled and tired, but he still liked the officer enough to go on. " I asked him if he was hurt, but he didn't answer; so I picked up his head and made it comfortable."

" That was a very kind thing to do, Adam, but "—his voice was very low—" wasn't it—rather difficult? "

" Yes, but there were two leather knobs on his cap, and I pulled on those. I had to hold tight. Then he talked to me and smiled."

" And then? "

" Then he stopped smiling and—"

" And—? "

" His head was too heavy and it slipped. I tried to hold it, but it fell with a bump and broke some glass on the clocks."

The Group Captain turned his head and looked at Adam. He laid his hand on Adam's knee. " You are a very good boy," he said, " a very good and a very brave boy. I will certainly take you to see Mrs. Harvey. Now, you sit there with Jones for a minute while I talk to her on the telephone."

He stood up, as if with an effort, and went over to his desk. He took up the telephone. " Let me have my car straight away, will you? And see if you can get Mrs. Harvey on the line."

There was a long pause. Adam glanced up and saw the Group Captain looking at him. He began rubbing Jones's right ear. Adam liked the officer very much now, not only because of the nice things he had just said, but because he was going to take him to see Mrs. Harvey.

There was a click in the telephone, and the faint rasp of a voice vibrating in the receiver.

" Diana, this is John. So very sorry to disturb you; but I think you ought to see someone who is here in my office—if you can bear it. He's a little boy . . . Yes, but he has a message for you. He was the first to reach Jack, and Jack gave him a message . . . Yes . . . No, we didn't know either until he arrived here just now . . . No, he wasn't in pain; he was only conscious for a second or two before it was over . . . The boy? . . . Yes, quite sure. Yes, I'm certain he's on the level. I've questioned him carefully . . . No, he won't tell me what it is, and I don't want him to . . . I think you will like him . . . Right, I'll bring him straight over."

Five minutes later, with Adam sitting by the Group Captain

and Jones wedged in between them, they were on their way round the airfield to the officers' married quarters.

The big car pulled up in front of a white-painted bungalow, with bright flowers in the garden and gay curtains in the windows. Adam could see the front door begin to open even before they came to a stop, and a tall figure in a light dress come out into the shadow of the porch. When they got out of the car she moved back into the house and held open the door.

Once inside, Adam came face to face with Mrs. Harvey. He looked up at her and liked what he saw, although he thought she looked very tired and sad.

The Group Captain touched her lightly on the arm: " Diana, this is Adam. The person on the red string is Jones. Adam, this is Mrs. Harvey."

Adam put up his hand and she took it in hers.

" Good afternoon, Adam—and Jones, too—it is very kind of you both to come all this way to see me."

Adam liked her still more. Not only did she look nice, but he had never before heard a voice like hers, so quiet and soft, and yet so clear.

" Good afternoon, Mrs. Harvey," he said finally.

" I'll wait here, Diana," said the Group Captain.

" All right, John. Adam, would you like to come with me? "

" May I bring Jones? " asked Adam.

" Of course you may bring Jones," she said, smiling.

Adam felt a peculiar mixture of shyness and pleasure in the presence of this person, who wasn't at all like the other two ladies he had met. She must, he thought, be something more important than a lady. He was amazed, too, at the room with its bright, colourful ornaments and furniture. He had once been inside the Vicarage and remembered it as dark and very serious.

Mrs. Harvey sat down on the settee and patted the place next to her for Adam to sit down. He first picked up Jones to keep him clear of all this splendour and then sat down with him on his lap.

" Adam," she began, " Group Captain Stewart—that's the man who brought you here—said you had a message for me." She did not look at Adam, but started absent-mindedly stroking Jones.

Adam did not know quite how to begin; he wondered if he ought to go through the whole story as he had done before. Then something urged him simply to repeat the message as the pilot had given it.

He looked down at the blue carpet and spoke slowly: " He said, ' Tell her, tell her '—he said that twice—' the cow jumped over the moon.' "

Mrs. Harvey stopped stroking Jones, put her arm round Adam, and kissed him softly just above his left ear—without a word.

Adam could not remember ever having been kissed before. He had turned his head, and was just about to speak, when he noticed the large tears in her eyes, which started sliding down her cheeks. He did not think a grown-up woman, still less a lady, would ever cry. He thought it even more curious when he saw that she was smiling through her tears. He felt very mixed up. He decided to risk a question.

" *Was it all right?* " *he asked anxiously.*

Mrs. Harvey nodded. " It is the nicest message I have ever had."

Mrs. Harvey got up and went to open the door. " I'm coming back in a minute," she said as she went out. She pulled the door to behind her, but the latch did not hold and it remained ajar. Adam could hear every word that passed in the hall beyond.

" Diana, my dear, I do hope it was all right. Don't tell me if you'd rather not."

" Oh, John, it was very, very all right. He is the dearest little boy I've ever met, and so solemn. You see, I couldn't tell you or anyone; I was desperate anyway. But Jack's going was so much worse, because—it seems stupid saying it like this—but we had had a quarrel yesterday morning. It was a bad one—almost our first; and I now feel it was all my fault. Then he went off and I never saw him again. Whenever we had a tiff, even before we were engaged, we've always had part of a silly nursery rhyme with which we made it up. Jack had used it with his sister ever since they were children."

" How do you mean? "

" Well, the one who first wanted to be nice said ' The cow jumped over the moon; ' then the other repeated the same line —to show it was both our faults really. After that everything was all right. I'm sure he must have known, John, in some strange way; because as I watched the squadron take off yesterday, I started murmuring that line to myself, almost without knowing it."

" Diana, I am so glad, so very glad, my dear. I was awfully afraid it was some joke—no, I don't mean joke, but some imaginary story the boy thought up after finding Jack."

Adam listened to this conversation, trying to understand what it meant. All he knew for certain was that both Mrs. Harvey and the officer were pleased; so he was pleased, too. As he was trying to make sense of it all, they came back into the room. Adam saw that Mrs. Harvey was not crying any more; her face looked very fresh and clean, but still sad.

"Adam," she said, coming and sitting down again beside him, "you have done a very wonderful thing for me today—I don't expect you know quite how; one day you will understand. You would make me very happy if you'll tell me something I can do for you. May I give you a present—something special?"

"I only gave you a message," said Adam.

"But I want to give you something. Please let me."

Adam looked down at Jones, who now lay sprawled across his knees. He wondered if it would be too big a present to ask for; but it wasn't for himself.

"There's a collar and lead in Mrs. Watson's shop . . ." he began, not knowing what effect this would have on Mrs. Harvey. As she was still smiling, he thought it safe to go on: "It's a red collar and lead, and Jones would like it very much." He stopped again, feeling uneasy. "You see," he added, "Jones will soon be a grown-up dog, and I don't want people to laugh at him."

A few minutes later, the Group Captain and Mrs. Harvey walked back into the house. The sound of the car was dying away.

"It was sweet of you to have Manson take them home," she said.

"Not a bit," he answered, "not a bit. I'll just use your phone, if I may." He picked it up and waited for the switchboard to answer.

"Station Commander speaking. Get me the Sergeant in the Guard Room . . . Sergeant, Station Commander here. Tell your man on the gate that my car will be coming out in a minute or two. I shan't be in it . . . no, but tell him to salute it all the same . . . And Sergeant, tell him to make that salute a snappy one."

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PICK-ME-UP

Many of the frail but fair ladies of the Empire Promenade dined and supped at the Queen's. But real celebrities like Adeline Genée, the dancer, herself often lunched there and so did many smart Society people. The bar downstairs was quiet in the afternoons, but there was a bit of a surprise one day when Bunny was sitting there at rest. Down the stairs fell a very flash-looking woman indeed, ending up in a sitting position on the floor. Bill Adams, the waiter, was equal to the occasion.

"No ladies served down here, Madam!" he said sternly.

The semi-recumbent lady looked at him.

"Bless you," she said, "I ain't no lady. I'm 'One of Those' and I want a brandy-and-soda." She got it. Bunny saw to that.

W. Macqueen-Pope, *Back Numbers*

SOVEREIGNS FOR SALE

His mad cry took Dublin by the throat

by BRYAN MacMAHON

"SOVEREIGNS for sale!" Against the roar of Dublin's night traffic, the shouted slogan held its own.

It came from the lips of a tall man mounted on a box beside the quay walls in mid-city. The speaker was dressed in a light-coloured suit, and his features were clearly cut against the night sky. More than anything else, his shock of iron-grey hair, bushing backwards to complete the oval of which his head was half, helped to make him a memorable figure. Over his head a gull moved effortlessly in the upper night.

"Patrons! Friends! Brothers! My cry is of sovereigns! Sovereigns for sale!"

Guard Maloney looped his thumbs more firmly in the buttons of his breast pockets, seesawed tolerantly on his tiptoes, and smiled as he watched the speaker hold aloft between forefinger and thumb a cylinder made of small shining coins. An old wife, the calves of her legs distorted by varicose veins, placed her bulging reticule on the pavement and paused to utter an ejaculation of pious amazement; a bus conductor, his bus empty in the 10-p.m. lull that descends upon every city, leaned against the polished bar on the platform of his vehicle and glanced around in search of someone with whom he could halve his indulgence; a young man and woman, both in evening dress, exploded with laughter at the speaker's strange words and then, pressing closer to one another, moved intimately onwards.

Far above the sovereign-seller's head, the gull turned, slid down an empty alley of sky, and then, swivelling its beak to left and to right, began to cry out as if upbraiding the heedless people below.

Meanwhile the man on the box continued with his declamation of: "Sovereigns for sale!"

Then one, two, three people stopped. They stood at a discreet distance from the speaker.

"Crackers!" one said, in underbreath comment.

"No doubt in life about it!" agreed a second.

"Looney-car will be here any minute!" laughed a third

But still, more vehemently, the cry came: "Sovereigns! Sovereigns for sale!"

Suddenly the cinemas and theatres opened their doors and began to spew out their thousands. Preparing to be disparate now was each separate audience which all evening had been united in the sibship, the fellowship, that follows upon communal suspension of disbelief. The magic of the sham had not wholly left them; thus it was that first in ones, twos, and finally in knots and throngs, the people were halted by the speaker's words.

"Citizens! If I tell you that I will trade my gold for your silver, will you not say: 'This man is a fool! A charlatan! A knave! An idiot!' And yet, is it not true that down the centuries there have appeared men and women of surpassing philanthropy whom their prosaic fellows have had to shrug off as sports or freaks or aberrations? Do these men not puzzle you solely because they chose to bestow rather than to hoard? I claim no kinship with these benefactors! If it's a name you need, you may call me John Doe. But I do claim to be their spirit-kin. What people forget is that this business of giving away money can become as violent a passion as the amassing of it. To this truth my actions tonight offer testimony. For those of you who trust me I have a message: it comes from one who, tiring of hoarding, has turned to bestowing.

"Listen carefully! Here in my hand I have genuine sovereigns for sale. I could give them away for nothing, but I do not choose to do so. On the other hand I do not propose to sell these sovereigns for their potential exchange value. I will not charge you four pounds, three pounds, two pounds, nor even a single pound note for each golden coin. Here now is my proposition: in exchange for each and every one of my sovereigns which I bestow upon you, I ask you, simply as an earnest of your faith in me, to tender me ten shillings. These are my methods, the methods of an 'aberration.' That is why, patrons, friends, and brothers, my cry this evening is—Sovereigns! Sovereigns for sale!"

The members of the crowd were not quite so cocksure now.

"Maybe he is doin' it for a bet!" one said.

"Ay, but it's only a maybe, though," said a second.

"It's a queer world an' there are some queer characters in it," sighed a third.

The theatres still drained out, each passing moment made the crowd larger. Among the crowd were many men whose eyes were faintly alive with cupidity. And yet, although the chink of coin carried in the silence over the heads of the people, no one moved. Each person kept his gaze pinned on John Doe lest he and his store of gold should suddenly vanish.

The crowd had now grown immense. Unpredictably, the sovereign-seller ceased crying his wares. He grew strangely limp. Turning his back on the people he looked upwards at the loyal gull. His lips moved as though in silent prayer. Of a sudden he swung round, extended a long arm with the bayonet of index-finger at its end.

" Home with you! " he cried. " All of you! Home! There to rot, decay, and grow dessicated; to shrivel, wilt, become gnarled, encrusted, embittered, small, wizened, old, impoverished, and cold. Home—to breed penny-souled children exactly like yourselves. Home—to eke out your wretched lives in the realization that once upon a time opportunity knocked upon your doors and—ha, ha, ha!—you refused to answer. You! You! You! "

The speaker stopped, swallowed hard, indicated an access of contrition and magnanimity, then in a weary tone of voice began anew.

" For the very last time I raise my voice—" Here he burst into prolonged and almost maniacal laughter—" and then I fall silent for ever. My cry is this: for each ten miserable shillings given me; I will trade a golden sovereign. Look! Look! Gold! Gold! Sovereigns! Sovereigns for sale! "

The silence was intense. The faces confronting John Doe had suddenly grown grave. The silence persisted until it was unendurable.

Then a tubby man, his black pin-stripe suit and bowler hat irresistibly reminding one of a retired midland draper, diffidently raised the crook of his silver-mounted umbrella. Holding up a ten-shilling note between his fingers, he said in a faltering voice: " I'll . . . I'll take one! "

With a slight " whew " of amazement the great crowd turned.

The shine in the sovereign-seller's eyes argued the city redeemed.

" Come forward, my brother! " he cheered triumphantly.

But, as if embarrassed by the attention his action had turned upon him, the draper remained in his place.

The sovereign-seller understood. " Your reticence does you credit, sir! " he shouted. " Hand up your ten shillings! "

The chubby man did so. The sovereign-seller put the treasury note to his nose and inhaled deeply.

" Ha," he said, " obviously a gentleman, a scholar, and a judge of whisky! A man who has faith in his fellow men! A man who—"

A huge docker, wearing a red scarf, shifted his weight from his left to his right leg. " None of your slack-jaw! " he shouted. " Give the man his sovereign! "

" By hell," flashed John Doe, " if I could but shed forty of my sixty years, I'd ram those words down that galoot's gullet! " He struck an old-time-print boxing stance.

The crowd cheered. The docker was nonplussed. He took refuge in a neutral growling.

" Gold for silver I said, and gold for silver I still say! " John Doe took one bright coin from his cylinder of coins and held it aloft for a moment or two. He then took a square of tissue-paper from a wad in his left breast pocket, ostentatiously wrapped the coin in the paper, and handed the small packet to a man near the platform who quickly transferred it to the draper.

As the tubby man unfolded the tissue-paper he became the static centre of an agitated swarm. Adolescent boys leapt to gain a glimpse of the gold.

The tubby man looked at the coin for a long while, then began turning it over and over in his fingertips.

" Looks good, mister! " one of the bystanders ventured.

" He might be a true philanthropist! " added a second.

" Or a millionaire gone loco! " pontificated a third.

The tubby man continued to gaze at the coin.

" I don't know . . . " he faltered dubiously. So as to give him light, some of the bystanders jostled until they had made a window in the press of people. Through this opening a street lamp shot its shaft of light. The light touched the coin and brought it to full beauty.

The tubby man screwed up his face. Lowering his hand, he drew a deep sigh. He gazed at those nearest to him—respectable and disreputable, prudent and shiftless, tattered and well-attired, lover and loved, young, middle-aged, and old. Again he sighed. He opened his mouth, popped the coin between his teeth and, tautening his shoulders, he bit hard.

Then, much as an apron falls from a peg, his face fell. He removed the coin and looked at it.

" Well, mister? " the man with the scarf asked hoarsely.

" A dud! " the draper said in a sad but firm tone.

The crowd buzzed. Anger came racing like water in a confined area.

" Chuck him in the river! " the docker shouted, his clenched fist raised at John Doe.

There was a surge forward, which was stayed by a word from the tubby fellow. John Doe—he was now discoursing on the vagaries of Harun Al Rashid—stopped speaking and turned his attention on the hostile knot of demonstrators. " Well? " he asked mildly.

" This sovereign . . ." The tubby man was now showing the iron core that had enabled him to make money and retire.

" What of it? "

" It's counterfeit."

" What? "

" It's no good—it's a dud."

" Did I hear you say the word ' dud? ' "

" Dud! Dud! Dud! "

Led by the large docker, the bystanders took a hand in the game.

" D'ye think you're addressin' gulls? "

" Give the honest man back his money! "

" Serve you right if we *had* chucked you in the river! "

Tubby's upraised umbrella again controlled the second rush forward.

The man on the box drew himself up. " Sir," he said, addressing the draper, " you strike me in the face with the gauntlet of your calumny. In the name of honesty, in the name of integrity, in the name of clean trade and fair dealing as between man and man, I accept your challenge! Repeat your allegation—or remain silent for ever! "

Smiling no longer, Guard Maloney moved closer. Crackpots like this had caused near riots before now.

The firmness of the denial had slightly unmanned Tubby. Glancing at the volatile faces around him, he appeared to realize that the anger of the crowd could just as easily turn against him as against John Doe. Again he placed the coin between his teeth and bit—harder than before. He removed the sovereign and looked at it.

He spoke out staunchly: " No doubt about it. The coin's counterfeit! "

The man on the box recoiled, then recovered. " Guard! " he clarioned. " Guard! "

Guard Maloney stalked ponderously into the lane that the people opened for him. " *Well?* " he said, in a south-country accent.

" The sovereign is a dud! " the tubby man said with vehemence, handing the coin to the Guard.

The Guard took the coin and turned it over and over between his fingers. His forehead corrugated under his helmet. He pursed his lips overlong.

The sovereign-seller struck a Napoleonic attitude. " I defy you! " he said. " Is there a goldsmith in your city? I defy you! "

The word " goldsmith " appeared to ring a bell under the

Guard's helmet. He glanced sharply up to the top storey of Shercock's the jeweller's, where a light burnt in a single window. " Come along, the pair o' ye! " he said, addressing John Doe and the draper.

The Guard, the tubby man, and the philanthropist led the way. The people followed in haphazard procession. Arrived at the goldsmith's door, the Guard rang the bell. A second ringing brought no response. The Guard then moved to a nearby telephone kiosk and put through a call.

This call brought a scared face to the goldsmith's upper window. There was a vision of a white apron, a narrow old head, and the shine of the spectacled goldsmith's half-glasses. " Be down in a minute! " the goldsmith shouted.

Faint steps were heard on the stairway. Bolts—one, two, three—were unshot. Restrained by a chain, the door opened a fraction. A white-aproned man showed his scared face.

" Test a coin? This hour of the night? Are ye mad? " he asked the Guard.

The Guard growled and advanced a single step.

Reluctantly the door closed, the chain came off, and then the door opened wide. The Guard, the sovereign-seller, and the tubby draper were admitted. The ponderous, panelled door shut in the people's faces. The bolts—one, two, three—were shot. The people settled themselves to wait and discuss the different aspects of the situation.

After a few minutes, the door opened. Out came Guard Maloney, smiling importantly. He was followed by John Doe and the goldsmith. The stout draper lurked in the rear. The goldsmith flushed the lingering draper into the street, then looked sourly around before closing the door.

The Guard took up a position on the step, hooked his thumbs in his breast pockets, and rocked provocatively on his heels.

" Well? " the crowd shouted.

" Well, what? "

" The coin? Is it good? "

The Guard delayed for effect. " Of course it's good! " he said ponderously. " It's a genuine sovereign of the finest gold! "

Hissing like geese, the fickle crowd turned their wrath upon the draper. He put the handle of his umbrella up to provide some small cover for his face. " I thought . . ." he spluttered.

" You *thought*! " the crowd roared. The mild manner of the Guard holding back the people implied that for two pins he'd countenance a lynching.

" Wild allegations! "

" No man's character safe! "

" Pitch the fellah in the river! "

Again the Guard's hand stayed the onrush. " Now! Now! " he chided.

" I'm sorry . . ." the draper meekly began, addressing the seller of gold.

John Doe, daintily dusting imaginary flecks from his lapels, said majestically: " You'll be sorrier, my friend! Take his name, Guard! "

" I'll witness it for you! " one man volunteered.

" So will I! " a second said.

" Twice in my presence he said that the coin was a dud! " This from the docker.

In utter humility, the draper tried again: " If an apology is of any use to you, sir . . ."

The subservient " sir " circumvented John Doe's anger. He preened himself. " I accept your apology," he said royally. " The matter is ended."

The draper spluttered his thanks and slunk away.

" Thank you, Guard. The law has its uses on occasion," smiled the philanthropist.

" It's nothing. Break it up, there! Break it up! "

Back at his base, John Doe looked sadly at his box. It was as if his outraged pride forbade his mounting it a second time. His boots seemed lead-weighted as he climbed on to address the people. On being greeted with a cheer, John Doe's head drooped modestly. Then a hush fell on the throng. The sovereign-seller eyed the moon and the faithful gull in the sky. At last he turned his gaze upon the people.

" My brothers . . ." he began, then faltered.

" My brothers . . ." he essayed, this time firming the tremble in his voice. " Man's inhumanity to man must not destroy our innate sense of charity. I shall not turn aside from the task I have set myself: the task of offering happiness to each of God's lonely children. I am convinced that the seed of this happiness lies in the precious metal for which men have endured untold privations; have robbed, have garrotted, have shot, have strangled, have smothered, have knifed, have . . .

" Gentlemen! " He held up his cylinder of coins. " I offer you the saliva in the miser's mouth-corner, the gleam in his eye, the hoop in his shoulder-blades, the tremble of cupidity in his thin fingers. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the target of the ages—gold! Gold! Sovereigns for sale! "

" Take my ten bob, mister! "

" Two sovereigns, mister! "

" For heaven's sake, mister, five . . . five for me! "

Hands, hands, hands—old hands, young hands, pushing, clenching and unclenching, shoving and threatening. There was a gold-rush in miniature as silver and notes were thrust upon the sovereign-seller. The city went suddenly mad. Guard Maloney found himself as helpless as a twig in a maelstrom.

" Quick, before he's locked up! "

" He's daft, but his sovereigns are sane! "

" They were tested by a goldsmith, I tell you! "

" Quick, man, quick! "

The sovereign-seller was shouting like a fiend: " The last! The last! What the cobbler gave his wife! The very last! Be quick! Hasten! Hurry! I warn you, the mood may leave me. Quick, while I am still an ' aberration! ' "

Silver and bank-notes showering. John Doe coping with the rush with the skilled agility of a swift shop assistant. Fifty sovereigns sold—one hundred, two hundred, five hundred—one thousand sold. The mad cry of " Sovereigns for sale! " took Dublin by the throat.

At last John Doe faltered. He raised a restraining hand, then suddenly spread his fingers wide against the night sky.

" My brothers! " he called in a ringing voice.

A short moan rose from the throng.

" That is all . . . for tonight! My quota is exceeded. On the 13th of this month, at 8.17 p.m. precisely, I shall be here once more. That is all! From the bottom of my heart, I thank you! "

" Three cheers for John Doe! " This from the docker wearing the red scarf. " Hip, hip . . ."

" Hurrah! "

" Hip, hip . . ."

" Hurrah! "

" Hip, hip . . ."

" Hurrah! "

John Doe was overwhelmed. " God bless you! God bless you all! " he said brokenly.

The dream at an end. Suburbia suddenly recalled. Trams to be caught. A tale to be told. A coin (three, or four, or five for the more agile) secure in the fob pocket, in the palm of a sweaty hand, in a wallet, in a purse. Destined for a watch-chain, a brooch, or a ring. Home recalled. A peevish spouse to be placated, astuteness to be vouched for, adventure to be shared. Home.

The city grows quieter. Gradually Guard Maloney begins

again to loom large on his beat. He paces briskly. When, at midnight, the newsboys call the first of the morrow's papers, he will be released.

In the dayroom of the nearby barracks, the clock strikes midnight. Three of the Guards and an elderly Sergeant are somnolently playing cards on the bare table. Released from duty, Maloney enters.

" I'll tell ye a damn good one," he says, as he hangs up his baton.

" We're tired of your good ones," one Guard mutters.

" Never had a story in your life," adds a second.

" Let me play my cards," growls the Sergeant.

" Happened to me tonight! Down by the quays a greypate got up and began to sell sovereigns . . ."

" We've heard it all before! "

" Put a sock in it! "

" Wait! " the Sergeant says, placing his cards face downwards on the table. Mildly: " Tell your story, son."

The story finished, the Sergeant sprang for the phone. " Airport! " he yapped. " Priority! "

The call was through like a flash. The Sergeant began to bark. " A tall guy? Bush o' grey hair? Angelic? That's the fellah! Yes, I see. What time? Oh! It's twelve-five now. Ah well! No, nothing, nothing at all! 'Sall right."

Silently the Sergeant put down the receiver and looked hard at Guard Maloney. He closed his mouth and breathed reprimandingly through his nose.

" What is it? " Maloney quavered.

" Get ready for phone calls by the score. Greypate left on Moonlight Flight No. 1 to Liverpool. He landed in England ten minutes ago. Himself, and a chubby fellow who looked for all the world like a retired small-town draper! "

★ ★ ★

TARGET FOR TONIGHT

One morning as I walked down King's Road, Chelsea, I ran again into Seymour Leslie. " I suppose we will meet at dinner tonight? " Now our hostess was reputed to be the biggest lion hunter in London. In fact an American girl who did not know the idiom once said to her, " I hear that you are a great shot."

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY,
It Isn't This Time of Year at All

SERENADE

If music be the food of love, play on

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Twelfth Night*

There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song—
" Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?
Flower o' the thyme "—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes—
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met—
" Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows? "

ROBERT BROWNING, *Fra Lippo Lippi*

Oh, my Darling!

" I've been asking about you," he said. " You sing, don't you? "

" A little," she replied evenly. " I've never been taught."

" Have you ever heard a song called *Clementine*? "

" I don't remember it."

" Come out to the verandah with me," he said, " and I'll sing it to you."

" Now? " she faltered.

" This minute."

The verandah was warm. A dog barked somewhere, hidden by a dark plantation of pines. Dim mountains loomed in the starlight behind the house. The young farmer, whose name she found she could not recollect, began immediately to sing in a loud tenor voice.

"No," she begged, terrified, "no, no—everyone will hear! I thought you only meant it as a joke."

He stopped at once, while the fiddle and piano continued to beat indoors. Only the dog behind the trees had heard the song, and now broke into a frenzied barking.

"You don't like my voice?" the blue uniform asked her.

"It wasn't that. Only—"

"My one parlour trick," he sighed. "A pity."

"I think you'd better take me indoors."

"On one condition." Amazingly, his face was grinning and close to hers. "If you'll tell me how I can see you again to-morrow."

"No," she said, "no."

"Very well." And again the loud tenor voice fell all too bountifully on the night.

"Please . . . please . . . "

As he stretched out his arms to bar her from returning to the house she was almost in tears.

"Tomorrow then? I'll meet you by the lime-quarry on the lower road . . . We can ride."

"Yes," she promised at last. "Yes . . . only don't sing any more now."

The threatened tears were gone; she was even smiling, as evidence that the whole thing was a joke.

JAMES COURAGE, *The Fifth Child*

Moonlight Sonata

Your soul is a sealed garden, and there go
With masque and bergamasque fair companies
Playing on lutes and dancing and as though
Sad under their fantastic fripperies.

Though they in minor keys go carolling
Of love the conqueror and of live boon
They seem to doubt the happiness they sing
And the song melts into the light of the moon,

The sad light of the moon, so lovely fair
That all the birds dream in the leafy shade
And the slim fountains sob into the air
Among the marble statues in the glade.

PAUL VERLAINE, *Clair de Lune,*
translated by Arthur Symons

Stringing Along

The same lady, several years ago, made an escapade with a Swede, Count Fersen, and they arrived at an Osteria on the road to Rome or thereabouts. It was a summer evening, and, while they were at supper, they were suddenly regaled by a symphony of fiddles in an adjacent department, so prettily played, that, wishing to hear them more distinctly, the Count rose, and going into the musical society, said, " Gentlemen, I am sure that, as a company of gallant cavaliers, you will be delighted to show your skill to a lady, who feels anxious," etc., etc.

The men of harmony were all acquiescence—every instrument was tuned and toned, and, striking up one of their most ambrosial airs, the whole band followed the Count to the lady's apartment. At their head was the first fiddler, who, bowing and fiddling at the same moment, headed his troop and advanced up the room.

Death and discord!—it was the Marquis himself, who was on a serenading party in the country, while his spouse had run away from town. The rest may be imagined—but, first of all, the lady tried to persuade him that she was there on purpose to meet him, and had chosen this method for an harmonic surprise.

LORD BYRON, *in a letter to Thomas Moore, 24th December*, 1816

La Princesse Lointaine

There is an air for which I would disown
Mozart's, Rossini's, Weber's melodies—
A sweet sad air that languishes and sighs,
And keeps its secret charm for me alone.

Whene'er I hear that music vague and old,
Two hundred years are mist that rolls away;
The thirteenth Louis reigns, and I behold
A green land golden in the dying day.

An old red castle, strong with stony towers,
The windows gay with many-coloured glass;
Wide plains, and rivers flowing among flowers,
That bathe the castle basement as they pass.

In antique weed, with dark eyes and gold hair,
A lady looks forth from her window high;
It may be that I knew and found her fair,
In some forgotten life, long time gone by.

GERARD DE NERVAL, *An Old Tune, translated by Andrew Lang*

JUNGLE LAW

The temptation to flirt with danger was too strong for her

by FRANCIS DIDELOT

THERE were five of them in the group. Five men, of diverse upbringing and temperament, who would have had nothing in common with each other at home, in France. But out there, in that desolate, sun-baked corner of Africa, linked by their isolation and common existence, they drew together in self-defence, against the encroaching powers of darkness and degradation that threaten all those whose lives have been transplanted to alien soil.

Regardless of departures or administrative changes, the group remained intact. One member could leave, his replacement would automatically take over his part in the group. It wasn't so much a question of Larrieu and Charvin, Dereumeaux and Mariotti, as it was of district officer and trader, engineer and native-born settler—entities rather than identities.

It was to take a crisis to bring these five out of the shadow, to turn them into men again, with names and contrasting personalities, and it was Gérard Dumay who lit the fuse.

Dumay was the newest recruit to the group, and the latest arrival in the colony—that colony which lay in wait, like a wild animal, ready to destroy any who were ignorant of its unwritten laws and might violate them.

His university studies over, Dumay had been looking for a job in vain until one day he received the offer of this post in Africa, as manager of a firm of cotton-growers and manufacturers. At first glance, not a very attractive opening, but beggars can't be choosers—not when they are married and need the money. He packed up and set off for Africa.

"I'll send for you soon," he told his wife.

On reaching the colony, he had his first disappointment. The mill had been abandoned for some time, and its half-demolished equipment was in a state of ruin. The plantations were equally neglected, and produced only the poorest crops. But Dumay had youth on his side, and enthusiasm and will.

And, also, the support of the group. It was some months

since his predecessor had died, and the gap left by his death had not been filled. The group therefore welcomed Gérard uncritically, each of them vying with the others to give him help and advice. Especially Mariotti.

Mariotti was a strange creature, and the exact opposite of Dumay. Born in the colony, he had been formed by Africa. Often, as a child, his clumsy finger had traced her great outline on the map. As he grew up, however, he began to feel the attraction of other countries, and he set off, penniless, seeking adventure. And he had met with many, as merchant, prospector, or whatever he turned his hand to.

Now he was at the head of his own cotton firm, a direct competitor therefore of Dumay's. But from the start, he was his guide and friend. It was Mariotti who broke him in, who pointed the way, always ready to help, whether it was mending a broken-down machine or suggesting a new method of irrigation. And, even better, he introduced Dumay to the life of the group, and of the jungle, for Mariotti knew the country better than the natives did. The negroes, indeed, feared him as they would the most powerful witch-doctor.

On his first evening Gérard happened to mention that he had left his wife behind in France. The reaction to this was slight. A laconic " Oh " was the only reply from Charvin, who all day long, under the grilling iron roof of his store, sold anything and everything.

" I have, too," said Larrieu, the district officer, coldly.

As for Dereumeaux, who ran a garage that acted as hospital for all broken-down and sick machinery, all he could bring out was, " Ah, women . . ."

Mariotti's comment was typically brutal: " Good idea."

Dumay stared at them. Mariotti went on, " White women can't stand the climate."

And that was all. With that, the matter was closed and women were set aside, classified as useless encumbrances with which one must not be burdened.

That was the law of the group, and it had never been broken. From that time, no one raised the subject again—physical needs could be satisfied, at a price, under many a thatched roof in the native village nearby.

Gérard, however, had not grasped the rule. He was determined that Eliane would come out to join him as soon as he had tackled the groundwork. When that was over, his functions would be supervisory and he could spend a good part of his time with her. She would come, all right.

He said so to Mariotti: " In two months, Eliane will be here."

For a second the other man hesitated. For some time he had felt the vague threat lurking; he had not realized it was so close. " You are thinking of bringing out your wife . . . ? " The words were forced out slowly.

" Yes," Gérard smiled. " What's so strange about that? "

" Well," Mariotti objected, " the climate—"

" Oh, that's not so terrible."

" You haven't seen anything yet. In the wet season—"

" We aren't far from Fouta. I'll send her there for the worst of it. That way, she won't feel any ill effects."

They were walking between the rows of cotton plants, well tended now and pruned. Mariotti picked one of the burst pods, and started to finger the tuft of white down. After a silence, he burst out suddenly, " It's impossible! "

Gérard started, and stared at Mariotti in surprise. He was still thinking of that! It had already gone out of his own mind, the moment he had spoken. But why should it be impossible? And why this vehemence?

" Don't you understand," Mariotti went on, " what hell it'll be for all of us if your wife sets foot here? "

Dumay burst into a loud, clear laugh—*That* was all! Some negroes, working not far away, straightened up, their grinning mouths like white chalk lines across their shining black faces. They liked to hear the boss's laughter—it showed he was satisfied, and that there was no risk of any reprimand.

" You're making a lot of fuss about nothing, old fellow," said Gérard, clasping Mariotti's arm in a friendly grip. " Certainly, Eliane is attractive . . . very attractive. But she's not a flirt. In fact, if you must know, she's in love with me."

" It doesn't matter a damn if she's attractive or not. She's a woman—a white woman. She loves you, does she? All very well for you, but it won't do us much good."

Dumay was inexperienced in the ways of men and, what was worse, in colonial ways. Again he missed the point. " Don't talk such nonsense. Eliane's a wonderful person—a good companion. You'll see, she'll get along fine with all of you. There'll be six of us, instead of five—that's all."

" That's all! *That's all!* "

At that Gérard's tone became harsher, more determined. " Sorry, old man, but I've made up my mind. She is coming."

And she did . . .

The group knew, the moment she had come. Some natives, flabbergasted by the sudden appearance of a white woman, had spread the news of her arrival. The group was waiting, in the

glow of the electric flares, on Larrieu's verandah, where they met every evening.

In an oppressive silence, they were waiting, anxiously. Each examined the others stealthily, looking for the detail that would give away their efforts to smarten up. Only Mariotti had done nothing to improve his appearance—or rather, had done his best to stress his untidiness. His open-necked shirt clung, sweat-stained, to his shoulders, and revealed his hairy chest.

He swept his friends with a piercing glance; from time to time his insulting laugh flickered over them, like a whip.

" All dolled up, Larrieu? And you, Dereumeaux—well, well, you've washed your hands! Handsome tie, that, Charvin—"

" That's enough! " Larrieu snapped back, his voice hoarse.

There was already a rift—a crack in the foundation of their comradeship. And only because they were preparing to welcome a woman among them.

Mariotti threw himself into a wicker chair, which creaked at his violence. " We're a fine collection! "

He put into words what they were all thinking, but only he had offered any resistance to this new challenge. The others had remained passive, or worse still, seemed to be welcoming trouble, going out of their way to meet it.

In the drive, the gravel crunched under the wheels of a car; brakes squealed. A door slammed; then another. They were on the point of rising in a body—except Mariotti—when something held them back, a sense of false shame made them hesitate.

Now they were listening. Two sets of footsteps on the tiled stairs leading to the verandah; one lighter, airier.

She came in.

They stared at her, motionless.

Eliane—the name suited her. She was slender and supple, rather tall. Dark hair and blue eyes. What one noticed first was the look of candour, too clear for such tawny colouring—a vibrant look, framed by the shadowy eyelids.

" Let me introduce my friends, Eliane."

Gérard presented them, one after the other. She stepped forward, her warm, golden arm stretched out. Each of them in turn clasped her hand or bent low over it, without a word.

The silence crept back. In it, their harsh longing seemed to stalk her, their desire followed her every movement. Their eyes stripped her body, outlined by the thin material of her dress. She gave a slight shiver.

Now it was Mariotti's turn: he had not risen.

" And this is Mariotti, Eliane. I've often mentioned him in my letters."

" It's a great pleasure to meet you," she said, and her voice was suddenly low.

" It would have been—" he paused—" elsewhere."

Although she did not understand, Gérard felt the overwhelming sense of constraint, and with a tight smile, he tried to dispel it. " Mariotti claims that this is no place for a woman."

" Why? " Her clear eyes widened.

Mariotti laughed curtly. " Oh, a woman couldn't be expected to know . . ." His meaning was brutally coarse.

" You'll see how wrong you are," Gérard said, " when you find out what a good companion Eliane is."

And she went farther: " You must treat me like an old friend."

" You are very welcome, madame," the district officer broke in. At his words the tension relaxed—even Mariotti seemed to become human—and there was soon a cheerful hubbub. These men, re-emerging from their isolation, wanted to teach her everything, to explain everything to this woman who, a moment ago, had profoundly troubled them.

Only young Dereumeaux remained silent. He was overwhelmed by his own awkwardness; he felt gawky and out of place, hampered by his raw, scrubbed hands, and by the collar that he had had such difficulty in fastening.

Mariotti noticed it, and prodded him mercilessly: " Haven't you anything to say for yourself, Dereu? "

As everyone turned their eyes on him, the boy flushed. Despite his tan, his colouring was fair, and the special care he had taken with his shaving that evening accentuated it even more.

" Oh, me! " he stammered. " You know me . . ."

" Yes, you don't give a damn! " came the raucous voice of Mariotti. " And you're only too right. Once you leave your engineering—"

" You run a garage, don't you? " Eliane came to the rescue.

Gratefully, he seized the opening. " I patch things up, you know. Do odds and ends. A little of everything."

" How interesting," she said, without conviction. Then she tried again: " Gérard tells me you have a boat."

" Oh, just an old tub."

" Well, you must take me out in it." She sounded like a spoilt child. She couldn't help responding to the prevailing mood of abject flattery. She could guess that she would reign over the group like a tyrant.

There was only this creature, Mariotti . . . Well, with or without him, what did it matter? But an instinct of coquetry drove her on. She had absorbed Gérard's descriptions of each of the men. *That old lion*—she would beard him in his den.

"And you, Monsieur Mariotti, will you teach me to penetrate the mystery of Africa—to fathom its soul?"

"Its soul?" He had retreated again into his hostility, fists clenched on the arms of his chair, ready to strike back. He had almost fallen into the trap; he had almost made an exception of her. But she was just like all the others, vicious and corrupt. One had only to watch them all gaping at her, to listen to their chatter . . .

"Yes," she went on. "Gérard tells me you are quite a witch-doctor on that subject."

"Thank you, Dumay," he scowled at her husband.

"Now, you mustn't hold it against him. He's very fond of you. You were a great help to him when he first came out."

"So much the worse." The words rang out harshly against the wall of tropical darkness, breached only by the two yellow pools of light from the flares.

A bat flapped along the cornice above the verandah, hunting for insects. With an instinctive gesture, Eliane seized her scarf and threw it over her hair. The men rushed to chase the creature away, its soft body palpitating with terror. Eliane gasped, "Sorry. Just nerves. I simply can't bear—"

Mariotti hadn't stirred. He seemed to be enjoying the scene. "What courage!" he laughed.

Dumay gripped his shoulder. "Shut up, or I'll—"

"All right, all right." He made a violent effort to control his laughter, but his shoulders were still shaking.

"You're being ridiculous, Mariotti," Larrieu reproached him.

"Downright stupid," said one of the others.

"Yes, I suppose I am," he owned up, with false humility. "But I can't help wondering how Madame Dumay would behave if one night she found herself face to face with a panther-man."

The room filled with a silence that was almost tangible. The words "panther-man" had no meaning for Eliane; she looked from one to the other, wondering at the confused fear reflected on each face. Larrieu made a curt effort to counteract the impression: "There aren't any left nowadays."

Mariotti remained silent, a sarcastic smile playing about his lips. But what were these panther-men, Eliane asked, and why had they disappeared?

"Members of a cruel sect," explained Larrieu. "Fanatics. Sometimes cannibals. For their rites—"

"Rites?" Charvin interrupted. "Crimes would be nearer the mark."

"Yes. Well, they put on pantherskins and fixed steel claws

on their fingers. In this way they hoped to leave on their victim the marks a wild animal would make."

Eliane repressed a shudder. " But they don't exist any longer, you say? "

" No. Some were arrested and condemned to death. The rest have been driven back into the jungle. As for me, I've never known of any except by hearsay."

" You've been fortunate," Mariotti's calm voice broke in. Then he added, " I've killed them."

She studied him. What a brute . . . " You're joking, of course? "

" Not at all. I know this country—your husband told you so. I know it too well for some people's liking. I know a number of things that even the best administrators have no idea of—" and he gave a satiric bow in the direction of Larrieu, who shrugged his shoulders.

" One night, some years ago, I was wakened by a stealthy movement in my bedroom. I always sleep with the window open," he explained: " For a long time now I have feared men more than mosquitoes, so I am careful to keep my pistol within reach. It was just as well for me, that night. I noticed a shadow moving, and shot at it. A pretty sight, I can tell you—a panther-man."

He rose soundlessly. He wore rope sandals, not the knee-boots of musical-comedy colonials. He poured himself a whisky.

The bat had returned and was flapping around the curve of the verandah. Mariotti spoke softly: " And I hope for your sake, madame, that you have many of these creatures to deal with, rather than a visit from one of those human beasts of prey."

" What a yarn! " murmured Dereumeaux. " You mustn't believe a word of it, madame."

" I have the pantherskin hanging on the wall above my bed," Mariotti continued imperturbably.

" It probably came from a panther that went on four legs," Charvin commented ironically.

" And I could show you the steel nails that I took from the fingers of my . . . trophy."

He started to go out. At the threshold he paused, and without turning, called out, " Good night, little lady."

Eliane felt a wave of panic fear submerge her. Suddenly she longed to run away, to leave this mystery-ridden country, to break away from the group whose friendships and feuds encircled her.

The morning, with its dazzling flood of sunlight, chased away

her fears of the night. Besides, Eliane was too much of a woman to ignore a challenge. And Mariotti, with his defensive tactics, his obvious wish to exclude her from the group, was a challenge to her.

The fleeting inclination that she had felt the first evening to win him over was to become an obsession. The struggle turned into a duel between the two of them, while the group stood on the outskirts, seeing nothing of the drama or of its significance.

Gérard merely hoped that Mariotti's hostility would be thawed in time by Eliane's warm friendliness, while the others were too intoxicated by her presence among them to notice what was brewing.

As for Gérard's theory of Eliane-the-good-companion, that was a myth, and she herself would not have wanted it otherwise —she was too much of a woman for that. " Good " though she was, in the limited sense of the word, she could hardly have escaped the influences around her. The very atmosphere, in that luxuriant period that precedes the rainy season, was overpoweringly sensual.

It was Dereumeaux who first lost control. Eliane had taken the estate car and gone for a drive, when it broke down in the middle of the jungle. Savanna all around, impenetrable thickets, and a sandy path that stretched, unendingly, it seemed, if one had to plod along it under the blazing sun.

When Dereumeaux suddenly appeared along the path, she was relieved. " What luck! " she cried.

" Luck? " he laughed. " Might be fate."

As he bent over the engine, his eyes remained fixed on her. Stealthily, he traced the lines of her body through the thin dress.

Suddenly the jungle rang with her feeble cry, as she fought him off. " You must be mad! "

At the same moment, there came the sound of other voices. A gang of negroes was approaching.

Dereumeaux drew back, breathing harshly. She was saved. But was she relieved, or disappointed? She dared not ask herself that question.

It was as if Dereumeaux's attempt had been a signal for the others to start. Each one now went out of his way to win her attention; they tried to organize solitary encounters, they brushed against her at the evening meetings, or held her hand rather longer than was necessary.

Larrieu brought her bunches of the roses that he had till then so jealously guarded. When she called at the store, to make some purchase or other, Charvin rushed forward to serve her,

cracked feeble little jokes, made mistakes in the bill, and showered her with compliments.

Eliane was surrounded by love: she breathed love. Only will-power and her unbridled need for victory over Mariotti protected her, for Gérard was no help.

By now he had become disillusioned. Confident as he might have been at the start, he could not fail to recognize the metamorphosis of the group, the hostile, watchful atmosphere, the spirit of emulation, the countless contemptible tricks and petty jealousies. He wondered, bitterly, what they all took him for.

All, that is, except Mariotti. He hadn't weakened—quite the contrary. He rarely came to the evening gatherings now, and when he did appear, workstained and casually dressed, it was in order to watch the others, sometimes to mock them. Always, he ignored Eliane. And so it was that Gérard, blinded by his doubts and his unhappiness, turned to Mariotti for help in what he was already calling " the disaster "—in what he could quite well have handled himself.

One day he went to find him in the brief grey light before dawn, when he knew that Mariotti would be riding through his plantations, and he intercepted him on his rounds. Stirrup to stirrup, they let their horses have their heads. Mariotti was silent, the expression on his face non-committal.

" Listen to me, Mariotti. We can't go on like this, Eliane and I. Something has got to be done—"

" Send her back to France." It was an order.

Gérard seized his friend's arm. " I've been thinking of that."

" At last! So you've reached the decision you should have made in the first place."

" They swarm around her . . . Sometimes I could knock them down. You're the only one I can confide in. I can't say anything to her, of course."

" Why not? " Mariotti gave an insulting laugh. " Lord, you're sure of yourself! How do you know what she's up to when you aren't there? Not only do you bring her out here, but you almost hand her over to them—all of them. Do you want me to tell you what you are? "

" Shut up! "

Mariotti gave a contemptuous shrug. " Send her away. I've warned you more than once. It's getting worse, day by day, hour by hour. Soon . . ." He left his sentence unfinished.

That same evening seemed to prove Mariotti right. When the group had gathered on the verandah, with Eliane enthroned in their midst, a quarrel sprang up. How, no one could have said, but suddenly Dereumeaux and Charvin had jumped to

their feet, and stood facing each other, tense, shaking with anger.

"I forbid you—"

"I'm not scared of you, you—"

Dereumeaux stood there, his huge fists clenched; Charvin seemed almost frail in comparison. Larrieu threw himself between the two, and, with great difficulty, separated them.

Later that night, in their own house, Gérard sat watching the swarm of insects beating themselves against the lamp, burning to death in its yellow light.

"Eliane," he burst out, "why didn't you do something to prevent all that?" When she pretended not to know what he meant, he went on, "That—that scene."

"*Me?*"

God, how guileless she seemed at that moment, with her air of strained innocence. He longed to strike her. It seemed impossible to him now that he had not noticed her perverseness and duplicity before.

"Yes, *you*! Working them up like that, pitting one against the other. That makes you feel good, doesn't it? You've ruined everything, spoilt it all. Since you've come, we've all been living in an atmosphere of murderous hatred. All because of you."

"Gérard—" she implored, but he was well launched.

"I've had enough," he shouted. "Enough of this poisoned atmosphere."

She remained silent. She had expected a scene, but not so violent as this. And what *had* she done, anyway? Nothing—that was what she found hardest to bear, this paradox that she was now faced with: if she had only yielded, none of this would have taken place . . .

He got up, kicking his chair away. He had waited too long, had let his bitterness progress too far for any reticence now. "Get out!" he shouted. "Get out!"

She took refuge in her room. There she heard his mutterings continue. From time to time he would chuckle, like a madman, and then she clearly heard the words: "Only Mariotti foresaw all this. Fool that I was!"

And for hours he went on striding up and down the room.

Late that night, however, he came in, collapsed in front of her, begging her forgiveness. Tears and recriminations gave way to a frenzied reconciliation—an illusion in which each of them joined, until it seemed, eventually, as if their anger and hatred had been buried deep in their passion.

The next day, in the limpid freshness of the early morning, stippled with birdsong and the cooing of doves, Eliane left the

house, walking briskly. She felt the need to put her thoughts in order. The " reconciliation," she realized, was little more than an armistice brought about by a blend of remorse and habit, by mere physical demands. Tomorrow Gérard would again fall prey to doubts, all the stronger for the day's lull. She must decide what line to take. She was sure of one thing only: to return to France would be admitting defeat.

It was then that she met Mariotti, coming out of a patch of savanna, already green from the first rains. At his approach, thickset, powerful, gun over his shoulder and game-bag at his belt, the usual feelings of mingled fear and pleasure stirred in Eliane.

" Good morning, Monsieur Mariotti," she said boldly.

" Morning," he replied curtly.

After a series of trite exchanges, he asked abruptly, " When do you leave? "

She watched him, her expression guarded. He returned to the attack: " I've heard about the . . . incident yesterday evening. When are you leaving? "

There was no mistaking it: he held her responsible for the tension that was building up. And he could see no way out except the one he had always advocated.

With the spontaneity of a reflex action, she parried, " Leaving? Why, when Gérard does."

He turned and started to walk away; she followed. For all their silent antagonism, they were closer to each other than either would have confessed.

The temptation to flirt with danger was too strong for her. " You hate me," she said, finally yielding to it.

He looked at her from lowered lids. " No," he brought out.

" Then why are you so eager to get rid of me? "

For a long time he made no reply. Then, suddenly, haltingly, for it was the first time for many years that he had even hinted at his story, he began, " I've been young myself, you know. I too had a wife I adored, and I brought her out, too, to this—this loathsome place. There were two friends of mine here, at the time. She went off with one of them. The other almost killed me—he blamed me for their flight."

He gave a hoarse laugh. " Oh, what's the use of reviving all that? It's over now, finished—like myself. But I beg you, Eliane, *get away from here*—for your own sake and Gérard's—and for the sake of the others." And, so low she could hardly hear it, he added, " For my sake."

A flash of lightning jagged across the lowering grey sky. Eliane felt that a similar flash of understanding had shot through her.

"Forgive me." She laid her supple hand on his bare, muscular arm. He almost jerked away from the soft touch, but controlled himself, merely hastening his step. She saw his lips move, guessed at the struggle within him.

"Forgive me," she repeated, not knowing why.

He swung round to face her, his eyes haggard. He seized her by the shoulders and kissed her on the lips. Then he strode off, like one who has gone mad, until his figure was swallowed up in the shadows of the great trees.

Long after he had disappeared, she stood there, motionless. He too, like the others . . . And she? It seemed to her that she had at last found what she was searching for, that only now did she understand her inmost longings, her deepest feelings.

Of course it had been easy to resist the others—none of them had known how to reach her inner heart. But, Gérard having failed her, she needed to love and be loved. And perhaps it was meant to be this man, who had himself been so deeply scarred.

It had started to rain. She didn't feel the drops falling, warm and heavy, on her forehead.

That night she didn't accompany Gérard to Larrieu's. For Mariotti might be there.

Gérard made her excuses. "A little off colour. Nothing serious. She'll be round tomorrow. She's gone to bed—a good night's rest will make all the difference."

No one noticed the madness that flashed from Mariotti's eyes.

Early next morning, Gérard found her, on the verandah outside her bedroom, horribly mauled. On the verge of collapse, he had summoned Larrieu, who now knelt by the body.

One look at the bloody furrows running down her throat and breast was enough. "Panther," was Larrieu's verdict.

Gérard was distraught. "To think," he cried, "that it was all decided. She was leaving at the end of the week."

Equally unaccountable to the group was Mariotti's suicide. No one noticed that the pantherskin was missing from above his bed, together with the steel claws of the panther-man.

Since then the law of the group has remained unbroken. But there are only four members now, and there won't be any additions . . .

★ *The author of this story, translated by J. E. Malcolm, has written several detective and other novels, but his personal favourites are his stories of Africa, where he has himself lived. At present Monsieur Didelot lives in Paris, and is President of the Syndicat des Ecrivains. His more recent books include "Belle Ardente" and "Adam et Eve."*

FATAL MISTAKE

It was a little, sudden click that came unexpectedly

by LORD DUNSANY

I REMEMBER one day at the Billiards Club soon after rationing had ended, and perhaps rather in celebration of that event, we had had a particularly good lunch, after which Jorkens had happened to fall asleep. And, seizing the opportunity, one or two of us had encouraged another member to tell us a story to while away the tedium of a cold afternoon of autumn, or to turn the minds of those of us who are workers in the City from dull thoughts of business.

The man we encouraged to entertain us with a story was a man who, we knew, must be full of them, for he was a doctor and must have held in his memory large parts of the life stories of many patients. My reader may suppose that doctors are not in the habit of telling such stories; and he will be right. In the same way he may suppose that the vaults of banks do not lie open for passers-by to take occasional handfuls of gold from them. But there are keys. And on chilly days of the autumn, when rooms are warm and the sun has already dipped in the chilly fog outside, there are certain wines that unlock reticent lips, although it is not perhaps in the public interest for me to name them.

Suffice it that one of them was passing along our table, and one of our members whom I never heard tell a story before was encouraged to talk, while Jorkens slept in his chair like a child in its little cradle.

"Doctors must come on very strange stories in the course of their practice," said one of us across the table to where the doctor was sitting.

"Yes," said the doctor.

And that was all he said.

"One often hears tales, very interesting ones, of their cures," said another of us. "But I don't think I ever yet heard one of them tell of his failures."

"Why should he?" asked someone else.

"Why," said the other, "those are the tales that would be dramatic, tales worth telling, often tragic. But you never hear a doctor tell one of those."

It is a curious thing in a club that, if you say to anyone, " Tell us a story about what you have been doing," whatever it is, he is by no means certain to tell you. But say to him, " I never saw anyone who saw a zebra," or a unicorn, if you like; or " I never heard a man tell a story about a rabbit," or even a roc, and you are much more likely to get a detailed account of any of those things; and it was rather like that on this occasion. For a doctor—Hennings, I remember, was his name, and he practised in something like ochteotomy—began by explaining the obvious, which was that no man talks about his failures in any profession, and secondly, if he openly admitted any failure that had cost a life, he might lay himself open to legal proceedings and, in extreme cases, even the police.

I told you that a certain rare wine was passing along our table, and the day grew colder and greyer outside as it went, and everyone was agreeing with the doctor, as we couldn't have failed to do, when suddenly he said, " I had a terrible failure once."

" Tell us about it," said two of us.

And he hardly heard us, for his eyes seemed all at once to be turned on the past. But he told us the story.

A man came into my consulting-room once (he said). My secretary had given him an appointment: I had never seen him before. I asked him what I could do for him, and he said, " It's my knee. Every now and then it will give a little click."

" I see," I said. " And the click is accompanied by pain, which can be acute. Now show me the exact spot where you feel the pain."

And he said, " There's no pain, doctor."

And I said, " No. You just feel a stiffness. That may be due to certain acids, which with the passing of years form into minute crystals. When these get into joints . . ."

But he said, " I don't feel any stiffness."

" Then what," I asked, puzzled, " is your trouble, exactly? "

" It's that click," he said, " as I told you."

" But a slight click in a joint," I told him, " need cause you no embarrassment. At a certain age such a condition is quite common. And it would be quite inaudible at twenty feet."

" That is too far," he said.

" But—but," I said, " if it could be heard at double that distance, what harm would there be in that? I see you have very acute sensibilities, and I could give you a sedative that would check that."

" No, doctor," he said. " In my work—I am not at liberty to tell you what it is, but it has to be quiet—"

"I hardly think," I began, "that a little sound like that . . ."

"In my work it might be fatal," was all he would say.

Well, it's not my business to extract the secrets of other men's lives which they don't wish to tell me. And there's another thing a doctor doesn't do; he doesn't show surprise. My job was merely to cure him, and he had a rheumatic tendency in his knee which caused that very slight and only occasional click, over which he had no control and which would come unexpectedly; a little, sudden click, and I set out to cure that.

I did not tell him what no patient wants to hear and what I now wish I had told him, that having got that much rheumatism into him and being now in the early forties, a complete cure was unlikely. I wish I had told him; but wishing is no good now.

I gave him all the best treatment I knew, and what with that and keeping up his hopes—without which there would have been no improvement at all, none whatever—I got his knee-joint so much more supple that the crack of which he complained was more rarely heard.

Now, I should have told him that that was all I could do for him. That's what I should have done. But I went on with his case, and there came a day when he told me that that joint of his had made no sound for thirty-six hours.

Well, I told him then that he was cured. I felt justified in stimulating his hopes to that extent and in believing that the stimulation of them, and the medicines and ointments I gave him would go as far towards curing him as it was possible to go; and I knew there was no doctor in my street who could have done more.

(His street, as we all knew at the Club, was Harley Street.)

I had done all that medical science could do for him, I had cheered him up, there is no doubt of that, I had stimulated his hopes, and I had never bothered him for a moment by trying to get out of him any of the secrets of his private life which he did not wish to tell. What more could I have done?

"But you did a lot for him," said one of us.

"Why do you speak of it as a failure?" said another.

And I myself said, "I think you did him very well."

"No, no," the doctor said sadly, "that click must have come back, and I had given him to understand that it would not. It must have come back one night and given him away, for an early housemaid found him lying dead in a passage outside a certain locked door in the Mongolian Embassy."

"But—but," said one of us, "what on earth killed him?"

"With extraterritorial matters," said the doctor, "it is always

hard to tell. They have their own doctor at the Embassy, and he said heart failure."

"What? What?" said Jorkens, suddenly waking up. "What's that?" And I thought for a moment he would have said, "I don't believe it." But, perhaps reluctant to let scepticism loose in the Club, he checked himself and was silent.

And in that silence the doctor spoke again: "Things worsened after that in the affairs of Europe," he said.

And, regretfully though he said it, I got the idea that he brooded more sadly over his fatal mistake involving that single life than he did over those troubles which darken Europe, and which are, after all, the affairs of other men.

★ ★ ★

HONEYED WORDS

One frequent visitor to Sir Edwin Landseer's studio was the Prince Consort; and on one occasion, being unprepared for the visit, Sir Edwin had left no message; the Prince therefore was treated to one of Bishop's famous lies, when the latter opened the door and saw those wonderfully blue eyes scrutinizing him.

"Not at home, Sir," was Bishop's greeting.

"Is he likely to be in soon?"

"Well, I am rather afraid not—he's gone in the country!"

"In the country—*where*?"

"I really cannot say, Sir. It may be for the Queen."

In stalked Prince Albert. He remarked quietly, "You must be worth hundreds a year to your master!" Then, pushing past the man, he walked down the long garden to the studio and up to Sir Edwin, when, putting a hand on each of the painter's shoulders, he exclaimed, "I congratulate you on having the Prince of Liars in your faithful service! What do you mean by having me informed you were in the country?"

"Well, your Royal Highness can scarcely call this place a town!" protested Sir Edwin, with his slow, hesitating speech.

Landseer was frequently at Windsor, and on one occasion, when walking up and down the terrace before the Castle with Queen Victoria, they were pestered by a most persistent bee. It seemed to follow the Queen's every movement, and several times she tried to flick it away with her handkerchief till at last, coming to a full pause, she turned despairingly to Sir Edwin and remarked, "I never saw anything like it! What can make it follow me like this?"

"I know not, your Majesty," rejoined Sir Edwin promptly, "unless it be a queen bee!"

A. M. W. STIRLING, *Victorian Sidelights*

AWAKEN TO ME

**As she smiled in her sleep
a wilder beat struck into his pulse**

by EDMUND GILLIGAN

TO the enchantment of her eyes, closed in sleep, Shane yielded and closed his own. He had wished to awaken her because it had been so long, so very long, since he had seen her and he had come so far. Flying the livelong day over the green seas and the coral islands, out of the south Atlantic to the western blue, until the fairyland pattern of the city lights showed under the enormous wing.

Five hundred miles from the city, long before the plane began to slide out of the stratosphere, the steward had made Shane laugh, by announcing, "Due to favourable winds, our landing time has been advanced six minutes." He had laughed because of his thought: "Good! Then I'll have her in my arms six minutes earlier than I expected." Thirty-three days of absence; six minutes gained at the very end.

He opened his eyes and, stirring lightly on his pillow, gazed at her beauty turned towards him: the unmarred, perfect forehead, the eyelids shadowed by the moonlight, the untinted mouth, and her breathing, calm and deep. She smiled in her sleep and at once a wilder beat struck into his pulse. His heart made itself heard above the mountain music: the creek flowing below his apple orchard, where the boughs held nosegays to the new moon, and the beseeching chorus of the frogs farther on, begging the moon for rain, rain, rain.

He whispered, "I know you're awake, Nora. Open your eyes."

The moonlight vanished. He watched it glide away from the great bed, just as if a turning searchlight had struck the windows. The chorus in the alders ceased. An image of the thousands of singers rose; all these tiny eyes turned towards the dry moon. He pitied them lest the drought drive them to hide in the earth and suffer there in silence.

The wind ceased. In the new silence, he heard, far down in the meadows, the brief accent of a cock pheasant. Out of the forest to the west, the great owl cried its three deep notes. After that, he listened for the other music: the tune of Ram Kill flowing under the bluestone ledges. He heard nothing of it, and he knew

the water was so low in the trout pools that it could make no music.

He tried to pursue his longing for rain, to make a great matter of it. His longing for her kiss interfered roughly, and the longing turned abruptly into a subtle anger. He called himself a fool because he had driven so quietly into the yard, had stolen through the house, because he knew how busy the days were when he was away. "Why should I come so softly into the house? She knew I was on my way. And into this bed as if—"

She stirred and lifted her hand in a sleepy gesture and let it fall so close to him that he could touch it with his lips. He kissed her hand once, twice, a third time, quite aware that he was being crafty and that he meant to awaken her, and then, perhaps, tell her he couldn't help it.

"Who kissed me? Is it you, Captain?" and: "Bedtime, bedtime."

"I kissed you, Nora. I am here. Don't you hear me?"

She had gone away again. The tenderness of her smile lingered until the peaceful depth of her sleep overwhelmed her half-dream of a kiss. Now her lips were parted ever so slightly. The change nagged at his heart until its resentment went beyond subtlety. He gave way to his longing, peered through the darkness until he saw clearly how far away she had gone. Even the invoked dream of a kiss had failed to stir her into opening her eyes, which he longed to see gazing at him in relief, in joy.

"Well, it's love. It's being in love. That's the trouble with me. She's sleepy. And the long day and the waiting keep her so. I'll go to sleep."

Another part of him replied, "Women don't really understand love. I've been away so long. And she left a light burning for me. Why, it's not even midnight yet. I'll kiss her. I certainly will. In a moment."

Shane closed his eyes. The outer night seized the attention of his heart and mind. What was going on? Nothing. The nothingness raised him to alertness. Nevertheless, he kept his eyes closed, so tightly closed that strange globes of light soared under his lids, soared, and curved in a tumbling lilac succession. This always happened and he had always resolved to find out why. Another light marched over his closed lids. It seemed to be a flash of lilac, too. It had lighted the whole world.

He opened his eyes, just in time to see the beautiful light receding from the windows, just as the moon had gone. What was it? The birds in their near nests chirped to one another. He heard the mare thump in her stall. A dog barked, just once. The

wind pushed strongly at the curtains, lifted them, and let them fall. The wind had changed. It blew from the east, and carried to him a promise of joy soon to come. The promise was so subtle, so very deep within him, that he couldn't say what it was.

His heart beat so strongly that he could hear it; and then, between one beat and another, the outer world beat one louder stroke, so far, so remote, that he became uncertain.

Some change had taken place because, at a signal, the chorus in the alder swamps began, this time in a louder song, which seemed to him not a plea, but a rejoicing. The wind blowing into the room was sweetened with the fragrance of apple blossom and of roses in her garden.

In the instant of the noise, she had started to turn towards him. Both her hands reached for him and her bare shoulder touched him. Her eyes opened wide and she said clearly, " That noise? "

" It's nothing, darling. It was only my heart, Nora." He lifted her hand to his lips and whispered, " Nora, I've come back safe and sound."

She seemed not to hear him. Even now, when she was awake, his presence had little meaning to her; perhaps, he thought, none at all. He spoke to her in a whisper, and almost laughed aloud at the absurdity of whispering and the absurdity of his sly remark: " I have the most wonderful presents, Nora—"

The light returned, this time in a violence that seized the mountains beyond the windows, filled the windows, and stayed so long in their blue-walled room that her eyes, set in a wondering stare, took on an astonishing lavender hue. In that instant, when his whole world was beaten down by the power of the lightning, her face became masklike, an image out of an outlandish dream. The shadows under her eyes became purple and, at once, a curious resentment against those shadows changed his wonder to anger, something he couldn't stand even in the slow fading of light and mask together.

He lifted his hand to touch her face. The moment he did this, he began to laugh within, to laugh at himself.

She spoke again: " I know, I know! But he's flying home and there's a storm now."

By her tone, he knew that she was explaining to somebody else, somebody close to her sleepy heart, that at that very instant she had thought of him, aloft where the lightning played.

" I'm here, Nora. I've come home—long ago. Are you awake now, Nora? "

She withdrew her hand and began to turn drowsily away. She whispered, " Rain, rain . . . If it would only rain."

He said quite loudly, " It hasn't rained all this time? "

Her only reply was the deep, calm breathing of sleep. He closed his eyes. He began to think about the lightning. What was it? The real thing? He listened keenly to the outside world, and heard so little, so very little, that he knew a remarkable silence had come over the countryside in the wake of that lightning.

" There was no thunder! " The missing element had made the promise of the lightning a vain one, empty of meaning. It had been merely an enormous upheaval of heat lightning.

This made him angry again, and in that anger he quickly perceived that the subtle promise of joy had arisen out of a hope for rain, rain for his orchards, her gardens, his trout, the nesting birds, and for all those creatures in the alder swamps who might die if rain didn't come. His woodlands were far too dry, and the forests beyond, he knew, might burn because it had been so long since a summer rain fell.

His longing for rain forced his imagination to run again out of the dark windows and into the pools and up the mountainsides to the caves, where the mother bears must be lying awake now hoping for rain to refresh their cubs. The failure of the rain vexed him so much that he became tired.

He closed his eyes and let the drowsiness overwhelm him with its relief. He heard, tinkling in his memory, a phrase of piano music, part of a song she had not yet finished. Because the music held the sweetness of her heart and mind, it charmed him, made him yield finally for the night.

The next passage of lightning faltered in the mountaintops and waned so swiftly that the blue walls scarcely reflected it. Only the windows held the lilac colouring ever so briefly.

In the depth of his sleep, Shane turned slowly away from the glowing panes, away from her; and, in answer, she again turned to him, sighed in a dream, and let her hand fall on his shoulder. Once more the fragrance of the early roses floated in on the night air.

Far, far away, a vast rustling began. This was the thrashing of rain among the parched trees and upon dry stones of the great valley yonder in the west, where the river ran in a course almost empty. The pelting struck the mountains, and the trees, receiving it, cried out so loudly that the rustling of the rain became an uproar, sweeping grandly through the woodlands, over the meadows and the alders, and, in a whirlwind, it fell upon the roof and made the old house bellow.

Through the rain and above it, the lightning cracked the

darkness, this time in a glare that shone fierce and yellow. At once, the thunder rolled over the mountains in an outbreak so violent that the hills trembled. The thunder entered the house at all the windows, burst open a door below, and bellowed in the hallways. In the instant of her awakening, the second flash of lightning shone beyond the orchard and the redoubled thunder burst into the house and made the house roar.

She cried out, "Quick!" Then: "You are home? Oh, get him quick!" She sat up, her hands lifted to her eyes.

Shane sprang from the bed. He stood there an instant, his heart taken by surprise. He cried out: "It's all right! I tell you it's all right, darling."

"The Captain! The Captain!"

The flashlight gleamed under his hand. He ran out of the room, crossed the hallway, and pushed open the door. Their younger boy lay in his bed, quietly staring upwards. His hands lay clenched on the cover. He said, "Marmee?"

"It's Daddy. Take it easy, Captain."

"I was asleep and I heard the thunders. I knew there would be thunders, Daddy. I told her so at bedtime."

Shane took him up in his arms. His own heart failed a little when his hands touched the little arms and legs, stiffened by terror of the storm.

He kissed the child's cheek and said: "Daddy's home, Captain. It's all right now, Captain. It won't last long."

Even then, he turned to shield the child from the next blast, louder than the first. Again the yellow glare exploded in the room. Before he could shut his eyes, he saw the blue cornflowers gleam on the papered wall.

He took a backward step, and then, afraid of the onslaught of the following thunder, he ran into their room and placed the child in her arms. She drew him down under the covers and laid her right hand on his eyes. Her talk began, a soothing murmur, over and over again: "It won't last long, Captain dear. Daddy's home. Did you know it? It won't last long, darling. Hear the lovely rain!"

After that, she asked, in an entirely different tone, a clear note like a bird's song in the dark: "Are you all right, Shane dear?"

He didn't know what to make of himself because the question seemed to be one of supreme tenderness, yet it had always been common between them. No matter how far away he might be; when her voice came over the telephone, those were always his first words: "Are you all right, Nora?" He never needed to know more than her answer. His world lay in her reply.

Now her question raised him again to that curious, high pulse

of happiness. He answered by touching her hand, where it lay lightly over his baby's forehead.

From under her hand, the Captain said slowly, " Daddy, I was wanting—I was wanting to wonder if—"

Instead of the expected thunder peal, there came a piercing shock of lightning, a flash that seemed actually to be in the house itself, to flare through it in a greenish blast, burning up the very air. Its violence tinged the blue walls and coursed through the upper hallway and passed on through the farther bedrooms until, far beyond the gardens, its fire lanced against a tree and exploded in a crash of boughs and trunks, split and sundered, burning.

Shane rose slowly to his feet. He said loudly, " That was close. I'll see if Johnny is—that is—"

All the lights in the valley went out.

He switched on the torch and went outside to the hallway. The thunder struck his roof there. It was the most terrible noise he had ever heard, yet compared to the lightning, it seemed nothing at all. He sent the ray down the hallway.

It revealed the other boy standing in the halted act of running, his nightshirt blowing under his outstretched arms. The lithe beauty of the boy held Shane enthralled. As on all his returns, he saw how he had grown: the legs longer and thicker, the shoulders squarer, and the hands more manly, fitter than ever for the rod, the gun. Even in the instant of the light falling on the crest of red hair and the terror-stricken eyes, as the lightning glowed, the boy took hold of himself.

He said in pretended calm, " That was pretty bad, Marmee. Are you all right? Where's the Captain? "

" It's Daddy. I've just come home."

The boy advanced steadily into the light, raising his right hand calmly. The hand touched Shane's shoulder and they kissed each other's cheek.

Johnny said, " That was the old pear tree, Daddy, the one we were going to cut down."

During their passage to the room, the thunder struck the mountains to the eastward, rolled down the valley, and rolled back again into the house. Johnny lay quietly by his brother's side. Shane sat near him on the bed and touched his knee through the covers. The silence through the house and outside it became so difficult to bear that he understood it was time to begin his jokes against thunder and lightning.

" I can stop this any time I please. All I have to do is call Celestral 3-1000—I know the Commissioner."

Nobody answered; nor did the eyes open. "The only thing I don't like about thunder is—I can't shoot back. Just the same, if they do it again, I'll—"

Farther away and to westward, the lightning struck down the ridges.

The Captain said, "You'd better count now, Daddy. It's 'portant, very 'portant."

Shane began, "One, two, three—" and, at the three, the thunder boomed along the glowing sky.

"How far, Daddy?"

"Beyond Johnny's mountain. We're all right now. It's over now, Captain." At this, her hand withdrew from the little one's head.

In quick succession, the windows blazed three times.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

"Five miles, Shane dear?"

The peal came in a mellower tone. "Five and more, Nora. The storm is on the river now." They all knew this meant the lightning would go down the river to the Hudson.

"It will rain now, too. I'm sure it will rain a long time."

In a louder tone, Johnny said, "It can't rain long after a thunderstorm. It never does."

"That's right, but this time it was ready to rain, anyway, when the thunderstorm came. I'll see. I'll listen to it—that way I can tell."

Shane went to the window. He knelt by the sill and listened to the rain, and at once, to the gentle falling of the rain through the leaves and its patter along the flagstone walks, his heart filled with mysterious joy, and he listened with care until he made out, clearer and stronger than before, the trilling among the alders beyond the orchard.

By all these signs, he knew the rain had come to his world, to the creatures that he loved; and he let his thoughts grow rich with the earlier images, now changed: the trout stirring in the shrunken pools, the mother bears and their cubs rising in the rainy dark, the fawns licking at the drops on leaves.

He turned from the window, and at the bedside whispered: "Do you hear it? A summer rain. All night and all tomorrow. The trout will make a spawning run now, all right. They'll do all right now."

"I am glad, Shane dear."

"It's very 'portant, Daddy."

At this, in the usual way on thunderous nights, Johnny slid out of the bed, reached down, and took up his brother in his arms. Shane led the way to their bedroom.

When he came back, she lay deep in sleep again. As he lay down, he heard her whisper, no louder than the whisper of rain. All he could hear was the last murmur: "Lucky, lucky."

"What's that, Nora? What is it you are saying?"

She tried to rise out of her sleep. A frown against her tiredness marred her forehead. "The Captain—he kept saying: 'We are lucky, Marmee, we are lucky.'"

"Lucky? Lucky?"

"He means you."

Shane touched her forehead with his lips. She smiled and, turning slowly from him, fell asleep.

The old house answered to the rain, too. He listened to the sighing and fancied that it drank the rain, drew its freshness into the beams, the gables, and the parched walls. The night moved in and out, in and out, in the way of calm breathing; and the fragrances of the drinking trees and of her garden drinking, flowed over him, compelling him from one beauty to another, from the beauty of the filling trout pool to the beauties of her roses, then to her again. Yet he dared not move lest she lose more sleep.

There came again the three notes of the owl, so clear and loud, even above the noises of the rain, that Shane translated them and smiled over his translation: "Hoo—oo—hoo—hoo!" to "I quite approve, I do, I do!"

Then, as if in answer to the owl, there came the call of the cock pheasant. This shout, in the middle of the rainy night, so amazed Shane that he almost stirred.

"Kho! Kho! Kho!"

What was this lad doing off his perch at such an hour?

"Kho! Kho! Kho!"

In the darkness, the pheasant sang out cheerfully, and so clearly that Shane knew the call came from a covert between the main barn and the pear trees bordering the meadow. He waited, breathing lightly so that he might hear well.

Soon the same call rang in a new covert, and, by the change, Shane could tell the cock had crossed the road and now, his brightness dulled by rain, pushed through the alfalfa field to the briar patch along the apple orchard. There he stopped again and cried out the same beseechment in the night—three times, in a pitch so high that Shane understood the cock wished to be heard, that he was bravely declaring his presence in the rainy night, despite the fox, his enemy, and the house cats gone wild, for ever stalking, night and day.

Farther down the orchard, so close to the alders, that his cry

became a trumpet-note among the trilling chorus in the bog, the pheasant cried out again, and moved on and away.

Shane couldn't tell, for a time, the cause of this bravery and the crowed endearments. Soon he knew. Tracing in his mind the course of the bird's parade, from covert to covert, he understood that the cock-bird had come down from his safe perch, perhaps among the fir trees, to pass within cry of the nests, where his hens, each on her clutch of eggs, lay frightened by the thunder, by the lightning.

To each one, lying there, the good husband had come against all perils, to cry out: "Here am I. Here am I."

Out of these images, there rose in Shane that strange assurance that had surprised him. He longed for the morning to come so that he and Nora could go out, leave the seeds and grain near the nests, and count again the days until the chicks appeared. He began to count the nests—five times eight eggs . . . five times nine eggs—and, long hours after, out of a dreamless sleep, a shout in the field awakened him. He turned his head and, through the gay, green-tinged fall of the rain, he saw his boys running off to school, the tall one looking down with laughter into the Captain's laughing eyes.

Shane listened to the rain. Its cadence closed his eyes. He smiled and fell asleep into a dream of the sleeping wife, the rain, the world at peace. This joy restored the full enchantment of her closed eyes, and renewed his longing to such keenness that in his dream he turned to where she had lain the livelong night. He reached out his hand.

She took it in both her hands and carried it to her lips, saying, "Here I am, Shane dear. Here I am."

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ANSWERS to SPRING POSY

on page 10

1. *The celandine, in Wordsworth's poem, "To the Small Celandine."*
2. *Cherry blossom, in "The Cherry Orchard," by Anton Chekhov.*
3. *Rue, in "Sparkenbroke," by Charles Morgan.*
4. *Daisies, in Francis Thompson's poem, "To Daisies."*
5. *Violets, in Bernard Shaw's play, "Pygmalion."*
6. *Lilac, in "Elizabeth and her German Garden," by Countess von Arnim.*
7. *Harebells, in "Wuthering Heights," by Emily Brontë.*
8. *Buttercups, in "Home-thoughts, from Abroad," by Robert Browning.*

BED AND BOARD

Our lodger's such a nice young man . . .

FRED MURRAY

All boarding-houses are the same boarding-house.

Boarders in the same boarding-house and on the same flat are equal to one another.

A single room is that which has no parts and no magnitude.

The landlady of a boarding-house is a parallelogram—that is, an oblong angular figure, which cannot be described, but which is equal to anything.

A wrangle is the disinclination of two boarders to each other that meet together but are not in the same line.

All the other rooms being taken, a single room is said to be a double room.

STEPHEN LEACOCK, *Boarding-House Geometry*

Vacancy

I sit down, sad—not daunted,
And, in my weeds, begin
A new card—" Tenant Wanted;
Particulars within."

AUSTIN DOBSON, *Ad Rosam*

Breakfast in Bed

For the price of my room at Agincourt breakfast was (literally) thrown in. Polly plumped the tray down so heavily on the bed always, that its contents seldom remained upright. Not that much was ever on the tray. Birdie wasn't naturally a mean woman. It was just that sometimes her landlady's instinct got the better of her. Pieces of toast the size of postage-stamps and enough marmalade to cover a shilling was the rule. And although the teapot should have provided two cups, Polly's violence invariably shot a stream of the pale liquid into the sugar basin, or floated the pat of butter in its saucer; so that a single cup was the most I could hope for.

It was not Polly's custom to make two journeys where one would do. She brought in with the breakfast a damp cloth, and an astonishing amount of breath. With the former she flicked savagely at things, and with the latter blew dust into the air.

(She once blew an ornament off the mantelpiece.) And as she flicked and blew I was expected to finish my meal. This enabled her to take away the tray with the satisfaction of having " done " my room. To make the bed was my job. But this I willingly did, in exchange for the entertainment she provided me with.

SEWELL STOKES, *Rarely Pure*

Some Attendance

" Come home with me, my little man, come home with me and sup;
My landlady is Mrs. Jones—we must not keep her up—
There's roast potatoes on the fire,—enough for me and you—
Come home, you little vulgar Boy—I lodge at Number 2."

I took him home to number 2, the house beside " The Foy "
I bade him wipe his dirty shoes—that little vulgar Boy,—
And then I said to Mistress Jones, the kindest of her sex,
" Pray be so good as go and fetch a pint of double X! "

But Mrs. Jones was rather cross, she made a little noise,
She said she " did not like to wait on little vulgar Boys."
She with her apron wiped the plates, and, as she rubb'd the delf,
Said I might " go to Jericho, and fetch my beer myself! "

R. H. BARHAM,
Misadventures at Margate

Cover Charge?

Stray survivals from the Good Old Times can still be found, I am told, in spite of the pre-eminent efficiency of the modern American hotel. I enjoy the implications of a sign noted by my Middle West correspondent, Mr. Jack C. York, of Ironton, Ohio:

Beds, per night, 15 cents
Safe beds, per night, 25 cents

This imponderable announcement was posted, so I am told, outside a rooming house in Birmingham, Alabama. With a deplorable lack of *the spirit of historical research* (A. Huxley) Mr. York did not sample the safe and the unsafe to investigate the nature of clinical dichotomy in Birmingham. He is even reticent as to the reason for his presence in that quarter of the town.

REGINALD REYNOLDS, *Beds*

Buckle my Shoe

It was a fine still evening in the latter end of the month of May. The crimson window-curtains (which were of the same colour as those of the bed) were drawn close; the sun was setting, and reflected through them so warm a tint into the fair *fille de chambre*'s face, I thought she blush'd . . . How it happened I can give no account, but I neither ask'd her, nor drew her, nor did I think of the bed, but so it did happen, we both sat down. A strap had given way in her walk, and the buckle of her shoe was just falling off. "See," said the *fille de chambre*, holding up her foot. I could not from my soul but fasten the buckle in return; and putting in the strap, and lifting up the other foot with it, when I had done, to see both were right—in doing it too suddenly it unavoidably threw the fair *fille de chambre* off her centre, and then—

LAURENCE STERNE, *A Sentimental Journey*

Clear Profit

The landlady was always drunk at Aberdeen,
She used to keep her money in the soup tureen.

NOËL COWARD, *Touring Days*

All Found

That landlady in Leeds! I wonder what she made of me? She certainly allowed herself to be put out not a whit by my presence. She gave me very little to eat, and never made my bed. Twenty-five shillings, and all found, wasn't it? One of the things she found was a loaf of bread and a lump of that orange-coloured cheese, which I had smuggled into my room to stay the pangs of hunger. No doubt at the final reckoning this went down as corkage.

KENNETH HOPKINS, *The Corruption of a Poet*

Giving Notice

And when you have made a little stay,
You need not know what is to pay,
But kiss your hostess and go your way.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER,
The Knight of the Burning Pestle

SPREUGEL'S GREBE

As if all the excitement wasn't enough an astounding thing happened

by EDWARD HYAMS

I HAD an acquaintance who was quite a well-known ornithologist. He wasn't a professional scientist; as a matter of fact he was a retired tea-broker, but he was in the tradition of the great English naturalists, like Gilbert White.

His name was Byron Edmonds, and when I say that he was in the tradition of Gilbert White, I mean that he was so not only in being such a valuable ornithologist, but in a similar gentleness of character, a similar calm orderliness in his life.

Edmonds had enough money to maintain this; but he wasn't actually rich. When one visited him in his isolated house and lovely garden in Norfolk, it was like crossing the Swiss frontier during a European war; here was peace, a little arid, a shade self-conscious, but peace.

Edmonds was married, of course, and loved his wife in the same orderly, gentle, detached way he did everything else. Everything about him was still and resting.

Although he was so quiet and gentle and stable, there was one thing that made him angry: like most philosophers—and I suppose ornithology is a branch of natural philosophy—he was exceedingly unphilosophical about opposition. Even his archetype, Gilbert White, could be a little tart with naturalists whose opinions were not his own. For instance, there is the passage:

> *The* Anni *of Scopoli are now in my possession; and I have read the* Annus Primus *with satisfaction: for though parts of this work are exceptionable, and he may advance some mistaken observations; yet the ornithology of so distant a country as Carniola is very curious.*

Well, but Byron Edmonds was much more outspoken than that on a certain occasion. His dispute was with a man named Osset, Sir William Osset, about the habits of a duck called, I think, Spreugel's Grebe.

Ornithologists must forgive me if I am wrong about this and other details, because I don't know a lot about ducks, and I never understood the finer points of the dispute. Edmonds believed that these birds came over from Holland, to feed and breed in the

Norfolk flats and saltings, whereas Osset maintained that they did nothing of the sort, but were stay-at-home natives.

Apparently Spreugel's Grebe is a very rare, shy bird, and difficult to observe. But Edmonds said he'd seen as many as eight cross the coast in late twilight, coming from Holland. On the other hand, Osset said that their wings were far too short and inefficient for so long a flight, and that what Edmonds had seen were some other ducks called Pringle's Flat-headed Grebe.

Now, it seems this was an extraordinarily offensive thing to say to a competent ornithologist. Osset was notorious for his vitriolic pen, I understand.

I happened to be in the house when Edmonds first read Osset's letter in the ornithological periodical which published it, and he was furious. He walked up and down the room saying, " Why, it's monstrous. He must think I'm blind, as well as imbecile."

You mustn't think this petty and absurd. When one is outside the subject, it's best to take a broad view. At all events, the affair certainly wasn't trivial to the protagonists. They both walked hundreds of miles to get more evidence, and they wrote scores of letters, and they addressed meetings, and very soon they became the nuclei of factions in the world of bird-watching. Groups of lesser ornithologists formed about the two champions, papers and meetings became less objective than is desirable; disagreeable and even personal things were said at learned gatherings.

It was unfortunate that, in that year, Spreugel's Grebe was either so shy, or had become so scarce, that not one was seen. A woman named Miss Robertson—or it may have been Rob*in*son—claimed to have observed a nesting pair in the reeds of a mere near the coast, but it turned out that she was trying to gain notoriety, the birds were perfectly commonplace Pringle's Flat-headed Grebes, and not Spreugel's at all.

As if all this excitement wasn't enough, in the midst of it an absolutely astounding thing happened to poor Edmonds: he fell in love.

I'm aware that this sounds most improbable: one wouldn't have thought that, for twenty years, Edmonds had had enough ardour or imagination to do such a thing. But there it was. He didn't cease to be devoted to his wife, of course, who, however, was not really cut out for the part of Dowson's Cynara. He didn't cease to be devoted to his home, his habits, his Spreugel's Grebes—in short, to his past and present.

After all, he was then over fifty, and his loyalties were therefore to his past. Falling in love made him rather restless and

uneasy, even absent-minded, but it didn't make any violent changes in his life.

Edmonds didn't fall in love with a slut or anything of that kind: he was not a man to be moved merely by the flesh. No: it was girlish charm which upset his equanimity, the girlish charm of a draper's assistant in the nearest town, where the Edmondses did their shopping. She was an old-fashioned girl, a quiet, gentle, pale little creature, rather anaemic as far as I could see: not very strong, as they say. She was also, in an unobtrusive way, a snob.

The acquaintance was made when she walked into the door of Edmonds's little car, when he had carelessly left it swinging open across the pavement. She hadn't been looking where she was going . . . I fancy she seldom did.

When two timid people, who both feel themselves in the wrong, are thrown together by a mildly violent accident, they're so anxious to save each other's faces that they become nervously garrulous and forthcoming. It ended in Edmonds taking the girl —Lilly was her name—into a teashop for a necessary stimulant after her shock.

Evidently Edmonds made an impression on her from the start. She was mildly pious, and I think he put her in mind of a clergyman. And then, he was a gentleman, he had nice manners, wore good clothes. She was flattered by his attention. And she felt safe in his company.

In this she was undoubtedly correct: you mustn't suppose that it ever for a moment entered Edmonds's head to debauch the poor girl. He was the mildest-mannered man who ever lived, and though he fell in love with Lilly, that didn't turn him into a satyr: it turned him into a timid and sentimental youth.

I think it must have been the cup of tea, probably accompanied by a bun, which was fatal to Edmonds's peace of mind. Absurd? Not at all: it's simply a matter of association. The only romantic passages in his life belonged to his undergraduate days. As he was a mild man, he had been a mild youth, never a brandy-and-barmaids type of undergraduate, but a hot-milk-and-refined-waitresses type. It's a matter of taste. Tennyson remained a favourite poet throughout Edmonds's life.

I feel sure that the romantic thoughts and erotic images of his youth fixed themselves in an essentially teashop setting. But even those pale aspirations had never been realized in a sustained relationship. He had gone down from the university and, inheriting a good position, he'd been married out of hand by a quiet, sensible, determined girl, a couple of years his senior, and in want of a substantial and biddable husband. The same girl,

of course, who became the quiet, sensible, and determined Mrs. Edmonds I knew so many years later.

And now, here was Edmonds in a provincial teashop again, with just the kind of girl who must have been the creature of his juvenile dreams. It was, I'm sure, this resumption, after so many years and brought about by accident, of the male initiative which had been so early snatched from him, that threw the poor gentleman off his balance and left him, when he raised his hat to Lilly a few minutes later outside the teashop, in a state of nervous ecstasy which quite put the Spreugel's Grebe controversy out of his mind.

However, not for long. He had become an important man in the ornithological world, greatness was being thrust on him, and he could not refuse it. Nothing now could free him from the battle but the opportune appearance of a sufficient number of Spreugel's Grebes behaving in an incontrovertible manner.

None turned up, however, and the pertinacious and opinionated Osset continued to claim in offensively polemical writings that the ducks bred, and fed, and *remained* . . . at home.

Meanwhile, from time to time, Edmonds managed to see Lilly. Heaven knows how he found the courage to approach her again. Perhaps his excuse may have been an inquiry as to her recovery from the blow she had given herself on the door of his car.

Again they had tea together, with the inevitable consequence of inflaming Edmonds's passion . . . well, at least, enhancing his sentiment. I dare say they talked of the weather: Edmonds, in his gentle, manly style would go through the male paces of showing off by prognosticating, for example, a wet evening. And Lilly, barely audible, would answer yes, or no. I have reason to believe that they made more progress together than this; that Edmonds, with a really inspired feat of imagination, realized that she would like to go to the pictures, and took her. But then it must have come out that she would prefer a ride, from time to time, in his car.

The worst feature of this affair was that Edmonds was deceiving his wife. I don't think he had a sense of a guilty passion, exactly, but in telling his wife that he was going out with a shop-girl, he would have felt an awful fool. One can see his point at once. An affair of that kind is ridiculously incongruous unless all the finest points of the feelings involved are known: and *they* can't be told, of course.

Besides, Mrs. Edmonds might have been jealous, and she would certainly have felt that her husband was making a fool of himself and been angry. Edmonds would never do anything to

provoke his wife's anger, for he loved peace and order. True, the strength of his sentiment for Lilly drove him to risk those two comforts; but, unhappily, not to risk them boldly, to the extent of avoiding an easy lie, on occasion.

It must have been in a moment of unusual animation, perhaps when he and Lilly were talking quite at their ease in his car, and she had told him of a whole weekday off, that Edmonds conceived the wild scheme of being in the girl's company for an entire day.

He must have been committed to it, and looking forward to it, before he even thought of the very serious lie entailed.

Well, he told it: he invented a conference of ornithologists in London.

He drove away early in the morning, picked Lilly up well beyond the town, at a secret place, and they had their day together, a day of mildly friendly exchanges, of tender glances, of picnicking among the primroses on a quiet, sunny bank, of driving slowly through lanes where hawthorn buds were beginning to show lines of white on their green plumpness. In the twilight of evening they found themselves perched on a low cliff of turf, the foreshore of salt-flats stretching a mile before them to the sea, which was a purple line on the horizon.

And presently, as they sat there, silenced by the peace and beauty of the scene, the Spreugel's Grebes began to fly in from over the sea, graceful and swift in flight, not one or two birds but first five, then nine, in all twenty-two, growing from black dots above the purple line, to unmistakable ducks as they drew nearer, to undoubted Spreugel's Grebes as, showing a flash of colour, they passed overhead and on towards the marshes.

Watchers inland saw the grebes but no one but Edmonds saw them arrive and cross the coast and *he* had been officially in London. The silence thus imposed upon him embittered the man, he was in no mood for love.

He saw Lilly no more.

She was a simple girl, and hurt; but she was either proud or timid—at all events, she never sought an explanation.

★ ★ ★

LIBRARY

Here is where people,
One frequently finds,
Lower their voices
And raise their minds.

RICHARD ARMOUR

ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE

by HENRY CECIL

★

At the opening of this excerpt from Henry Cecil's book, Argosy readers find themselves in court, attending Alec Morland's trial for murder. Henry Cecil's pen scintillates in the rapier-thrust of legal duel and searching cross-examination, blending wit and wisdom into highly original entertainment.

That Alec Morland has taken the law into his own hands and killed the murderer, Gilbert Essex, thus ridding the country of a dangerous sex-maniac and saving the life of a girl named Rose Lee, is a closely guarded secret known only to Alec's fiancée, Jill.

In the eyes of the law, if it is proved that Alec killed Essex, Alec himself is guilty of murder. Fear of discovery haunts Jill. Shreds of evidence accumulate. She marries Alec secretly: as his wife, the police cannot require her to give evidence against her husband. She enlists the help of the astute Ambrose Low, realizing that there can be no future free from fear until Alec is acquitted. Alec Morland is brought to trial, defended by Mr. Duffield. Through Colonel Brain's stupidity, their hopes of Alec's acquittal are threatened with disaster, and Jill is in despair.

At Cunningham Assizes, Mr. Pomeroy, the prosecuting counsel, is opening his case for the Crown.

★

"MEMBERS of the jury," said Pomeroy, who was conducting the case for the Crown. "I do not need to remind you that the only question which you have to try in this case is whether the prisoner killed Gilbert Essex or not.

"You must put out of your minds, as far as you can, that Gilbert Essex once stood in this very dock and that a jury of twelve said he was innocent when he was, as we now know, guilty of murder. It may not, though, perhaps be out of place to remind you that, after his acquittal, he went on to commit other murders.

"In the same way, *if* this accused is guilty, I repeat *if* he is guilty and you acquit him, how many more murders do you think may be committed by people taking the law into their own hands?"

At this stage the judge, Mr. Justice Pantin, one of the oldest Queen's Bench judges, intervened. "I'm sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Pomeroy, but do you not think that it would be of more assistance to the jury if in your opening you dealt with the facts the prosecution intend to try to prove, rather than with the consequences of conviction or acquittal in this or any other case?"

"If your Lordship pleases," said Pomeroy, "but, in view of the

publicity attached to this case, I thought it desirable to say a few words by way of introduction."

"Very well," said the judge, "you have said them. Perhaps now you would open the case for the prosecution."

So Pomeroy opened the facts to the jury at some length. He told them of the finding of Essex's body below the cliff at Cunningham, of the piece of pencil found on the cliff, of the prisoner's visit to Medlicott from his home at Cunningham, and of his statement to Colonel Brain. Then he went on, "There is one witness I am unable to call, although every effort has been made to trace her. These efforts have been made as much for the benefit of the defence as for the prosecution. The witness to whom I refer is a girl called Rose Lee."

At that stage Duffield, the counsel for the defence, got up.

"I do apologize for interrupting my learned friend," he said, "but do I understand that, if Rose Lee could be found, he would call her as a witness for the prosecution?"

"Certainly," said Pomeroy, rather crossly. He had been annoyed by the judge's intervention. In consequence, he said, "Certainly," perhaps rather more quickly than he had intended.

"Well, in that case," said Duffield, "I should tell my friend at once that she's outside the court. We have managed to find her."

This was the first sensation in a case which was attracting even more public attention than the trial of Gilbert Essex.

Ambrose Low, at the cost of many visits to many public houses, had eventually found a girl called Rose Lee, who said she was the girl in question. Before risking an identification parade, he had tried her with various types of voice and was at last satisfied that the one point she would make plain was that it was an uncultured voice which had said to her, *The man you are with is Gilbert Essex.* No one could have said that Alec's voice was uncultured.

Duffield rose as soon as Pomeroy had finished examining Chief-Inspector Curtis.

"Inspector," he said, "how many times altogether did you have an interview with the prisoner before you arrested him?"

"Four, sir."

"And it was at the last interview that he refused to answer any further questions?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is a man of the highest possible character?"

"Yes, sir."

"With a fine war record and nothing against him of any kind?"

"Yes, sir."

"What kind of a watch was being kept on Gilbert Essex?"

"As far as possible, he was kept under observation, sir."

"But I take it that Essex was not seen or followed on his last journey from his home at Medlicott to Cunningham?"

"No, sir."

"Anyone might have followed him?"

"Quite, sir."

" I'm trying to see what evidence there is against my client, Inspector. Mr. Morland stayed at Medlicott? "

" Yes, sir."

" I suppose a good many people stay there."

" Quite, sir."

" And he went back to his home at Cunningham? "

" Yes, sir."

" Nothing strange in that, Inspector? "

" Not by itself, sir."

" He is seen on the night of the murder not far from the cliff? "

" Yes, sir."

" Nothing strange in that, Inspector? "

" Not by itself, sir."

" A lot of people must have been within the same radius of the cliff as the prisoner? "

" I expect so, sir."

" And a piece of pencil which he could have owned is found at the place where Essex's body was thrown over? "

" Quite, sir."

" Hundreds of people might have owned it? "

" Yes, sir."

" And, apart from Colonel Brain's evidence, that's the case against him, isn't it? "

" Not altogether, sir."

" Oh no—I forgot—he got tired of talking to you, Inspector."

And Duffield sat down, having made quite a pretty little speech to the jury in the guise of cross-examination. The trial continued until lunch-time and, during the luncheon adjournment, arrangements were made for Rose Lee to have an opportunity of identifying the voice which had warned her. True to his promise, Pomeroy called her as a witness for the prosecution.

She went into the box and, after giving formal evidence as to her name and various addresses, she was asked to deal with her meeting with Gilbert Essex. " I was having a drink in the Crown," she said, " when a man came in and sat next to me—he got talking to me and he seemed a nice gentleman. He ordered me several drinks and then suggested that we should go for a walk together."

" I take it you had not recognized who he was? "

" Oh no, sir."

" What happened? "

" Well—we went for a walk and he suggested going into the wood and, as he seemed all right, I said I would. So we walked into the wood. After we'd been a little way, he said he was tired and suggested sitting down. He seemed a very nice gentleman. So we sat down."

" Yes, Miss Lee, and what happened then? "

" Well—suddenly I heard a voice say something. It was dark and I couldn't see anyone."

" What did the voice say? "

" Well, as far as I can remember, it told me to run away."

"Is that all it said? Run away?"

"Oh no, it said more than that."

"Try and remember what else it said."

"Well—it said something about my being with Gilbert Essex and to run away."

"What did you do?"

"I didn't know what to do at first, but the voice said it again. So I got up and ran. But I didn't know if it was true. He seemed a nice gentleman."

"Could you recognize the voice if you heard it again?"

"Oh—I don't think so. It was just a voice."

"Yes, but voices are different. Was it a man's or a woman's voice?"

"Oh—a man's."

"Was it a rough voice?"

"I wouldn't know, sir. It was just a voice, a man's voice."

"About an hour ago were you taken to a room and did you hear some voices?"

"Yes."

"Saying something like what you heard the voice in the wood say?"

"Yes."

"While you were listening to those voices, did you think that any of them was like the one you heard on the night in question?"

"Not exactly, sir, but it's so difficult to tell, and it's some time ago now, sir."

"Since you were with the nice gentleman, you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, Miss Lee. Thank you. No, don't go away. Mr. Duffield may want to ask you some questions."

"Very few," said Duffield, as he rose.

"Do you remember when you were listening to the voices during the adjournment that you heard a voice called *Voice B*?"

"I don't remember the numbers, sir."

"Well—never mind about the letters. Do you remember this gentleman sitting in front of me coming up to you with another gentleman and asking you if that was the voice?"

"They came each time, sir."

"And do you remember saying once or twice, 'That wasn't it, at least I don't think so?'"

"Yes, sir."

"When you said that, was that your honest opinion? That it was not the voice in question?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you."

The first witness the following day was Colonel Brain, who had previously stated that, in reply to his remark, "I'd like to shake the man who killed Gilbert Essex by the hand," Alec Morland had said, "I'll give you the opportunity." In his cross-examination,

Duffield suggested to the colonel that the words " I'll give you the opportunity " had never been said.

" Now, it's funny you should say that," said the colonel.

" Why is it funny? "

" Because a man said that to me yesterday."

" What man said what to you yesterday? " asked the judge, in a somewhat stern voice.

" It was all perfectly friendly, my Lord. I hope I haven't said anything I shouldn't."

" What man said what to you yesterday? " repeated the judge.

" I was in the garden having a nap, my Lord, as a matter of fact," said the colonel.

" I dare say you were, but who came to you and said what? "

" I'd had rather a heavy day," said the colonel.

The judge tapped his desk impatiently with a pencil. " Colonel Brain," he said, " will you kindly answer the question? "

" Certainly, my Lord," said the colonel and waited.

" Well? " said the judge, after a moment's pause.

Colonel Brain smiled cheerfully towards him.

" Will you kindly answer the question, Colonel. You can hear, can't you? "

" Very well, my Lord. As a matter of fact, I had a test the other day and—"

" Be quiet, sir," said the judge loudly.

" I'm sorry, my Lord," said the colonel, and relapsed into a crestfallen silence. The silence continued for a time. It was broken by the judge.

" Colonel Brain, I don't know if you're being intentionally perverse, but, in case you are, I should warn you that I shall have no hesitation in sending you to prison."

" Prison, my Lord? " said the colonel unhappily. " I'm only trying to help, my Lord. First your Lordship asks me if I'm deaf and, when I start to explain, your Lordship tells me to be quiet. Then, when I keep quiet, you say I must go to prison."

" My Lord," intervened Duffield, " if you will allow me to say so, I think the witness has some difficulty in appreciating what is required of him. As he is a witness for the prosecution, I think I can properly say that I don't myself suggest that he is trying to be obstructive."

" That's very civil of you, sir," said the colonel, beaming towards Duffield.

" Be quiet, sir," said the judge, and the smile left the colonel's face.

" Perhaps I'd better go," he said. " I don't seem to be doing much good here."

" You will kindly stay in the witness-box until I say you may leave and you will answer the questions which are put to you sensibly and properly. Is that understood? "

" Yes, my Lord."

" Colonel Brain," said the judge, controlling himself with some

difficulty, " you are being asked a perfectly simple question. Will you kindly answer it? "

" Of course, my Lord," said the colonel. " I understand that's what I'm here for."

" I'm glad you realize that at last," said the judge.

" Oh—my Lord," said the colonel, " I've realized it all the time."

" Very well then. Answer the question."

" Yes, my Lord—when I know what it is."

The judge said nothing for several seconds, while he looked keenly at the witness. " Are you telling me," he said eventually, " that you don't know what the question is? "

" Not in advance, my Lord. D'you mean you want me to guess what it is, my Lord? "

" I mean nothing of the kind. Do you mean to tell me you were a colonel in the Army? "

" A lieutenant-colonel, my Lord. If I'd known that was the question, I'd have answered a long time ago."

" It was not the question."

" I'm sorry, my Lord. Shouldn't I have answered it, then? "

" Well," said the judge, " I suppose it is quite a long time ago now since you were asked the question."

" About the Army, my Lord? "

" No—not about the Army," the judge almost shouted. He paused for a moment and went on: " Now, let's be quite calm and collected about this—"

" Of course, my Lord."

" Colonel Brain, will you kindly say nothing until I have asked you the question and then answer the question and nothing else. Do you understand that? "

The colonel remained silent.

" Colonel Brain, did you hear me? "

The colonel nodded violently and said nothing.

" Colonel Brain! " thundered the judge.

" Your Lordship told me only to answer the question and nothing else—or was that the question, my Lord? I really am finding this most terribly difficult."

" Not more than I am," said the judge, suddenly relaxing. " Now, Colonel Brain," he went on in a kindly voice. " Tell me about the man who came to see you yesterday afternoon. Who was he? "

" A Mr. Low, my Lord."

" Mr. Low? D'you mean the witness for the prosecution? "

" I believe he is, my Lord."

" And what did he say? "

" He told me that Mr. Morland hadn't said, *I'll give you the opportunity*. But, of course, he was wrong, my Lord, as I told him. He had said it."

" That will do for the moment, thank you, Colonel Brain. Let Mr. Low come forward."

Mr. Low's evidence had been given and he was accordingly

in court. The previous day he had spent a fruitless half-hour with the colonel trying to disindoctrinate him, but without success.

"Did you hear what Colonel Brain said?" the judge asked him.

"Yes, my Lord."

"Was it true?"

"Well," conceded Mr. Low, "I have been trying to persuade the colonel to be accurate in his evidence."

"Do you realize that interfering with a witness is a very serious matter?"

"I suppose it is, my Lord."

"Well—have you anything to say about the matter? It is a very serious contempt of court, and, unless you have some very good explanation—if, indeed, there can be one—I propose to treat it accordingly and to send you to prison."

"Well, my Lord, I was only trying to get him to state the facts—and not some garbled version of the facts which he'd got into his head somehow."

"You were trying to persuade him *to change his evidence*."

"His evidence was incorrect, my Lord."

"So you say, and you were trying to persuade him to change it."

"I suppose I was, my Lord."

"Very well, then. It is difficult to conceive a clearer case of contempt of court. You will go to prison."

"For how long, my Lord?"

"Until you have purged your contempt. It's no use offering apologies now. I will consider any regrets you have to offer after you have been lodged in prison for what I consider a sufficient period to teach you and anyone else who may be similarly minded that witnesses must not be interfered with. And now, I think I shall rise. I think, perhaps, we've all had enough for the day."

On hearing the news, Elizabeth Low went at once to Cunningham Gaol. Although it was late, she managed to obtain permission to see her husband. "You are a blithering idiot," she said.

"I know—I know, but that doesn't help. You'll have to take on where I left off."

"That's why I'm here."

"Good for you. Now, look, I've an idea. It's a bit of a risk, but we've got to do something. I should go and see your father first. P'raps he can get me out."

Elizabeth's father, Sir Edwin Prout, was a retired judge who now lived in a comfortable little cottage in the country. He was surprised at Elizabeth's sudden, unannounced arrival.

"Why, Lizzie," he said, "how nice. But where's Ambrose? And why didn't you write or wire?"

"Ambrose is in prison."

"Nonsense."

"He is really, Father. It's all a silly mistake, but the judge at Cunningham Assizes thinks he was trying to interfere with a witness."

" But if he wasn't, why did he commit him? "

" He thought he was."

" But that's nonsense. Judges don't send people to prison like that."

" They do sometimes, Father—very, very occasionally, of course. But don't let's worry about Ambrose. There are some questions I want to ask you."

" But I do worry about him. There must be a misunderstanding. Have you got solicitors acting for him? And counsel? He must swear an affidavit explaining everything—you know what I mean: ' I didn't do it, really I didn't, but if I did (which I didn't), I'm terribly sorry.' "

" Father," said Elizabeth, disregarding his last remark, " is it contempt of court to talk to a witness? "

" Depends on the circumstances. First of all, do you know he's a witness? If you don't, of course you can talk to him. Then, if you do, you mustn't, for example, try to persuade him to say something which isn't true or to forget something or not to attend on his subpœna."

" Would it be contempt to go and see a witness if someone else had been sent to prison for trying to influence his evidence, Father? "

" Depends what you said to him. If you didn't discuss the case, of course it wouldn't be contempt. Even if you did, it wouldn't necessarily be contempt. But, of course, if one man's been committed for contempt in relation to that witness, it would obviously be dangerous to go and discuss the case with him. Your object might be misconstrued—and your words."

" But provided you didn't in fact discuss the case, it wouldn't be a contempt? "

" No, of course not. Why—where are you off to? "

For Elizabeth had started to give her father what he knew from experience was a good-bye kiss.

" Must go and see about Ambrose, Father. We'll soon have him out. Sorry to be in such a rush." And she was gone.

Fortunately for Elizabeth, Colonel Brain was in the meantime having rather a late session.

" You've come to talk about the case, I suppose? " he said.

" Good gracious, no," said Elizabeth. " I don't want to go to prison too."

" Of course," said the colonel. " How silly of me. We won't mention it. Or I'll be going to prison as well. Pretty dreadful the way these judges send us off to gaol. Everyone except the chap in the dock. Still, I suppose that's what they're there for. No use being a judge unless you pop 'em inside from time to time."

Elizabeth laughed. " You're quite a wit, Colonel," she said.

" You don't say," said the colonel, " you don't say. As a matter of fact, now you come to mention it, they used to laugh a bit in the mess after I'd said something. It must have been that, I suppose. I didn't realize it at the time."

" One often doesn't, Colonel. It's extraordinary how one doesn't appreciate what other people are driving at sometimes until long afterwards."

" Very true, my dear lady, very true."

" Sometimes a person will say something to you and you'll think he's quite serious. Then, after he's left, you realize it was only a joke. You like a good joke, I expect, Colonel? "

" No one more, dear lady."

" The funniest things are sometimes said most seriously, don't you think? Dry humour's the most effective. It's curious what a lot of amusement there is in life. And as I said before, so many things which seem serious at the time are meant to be jokes."

" You think so? "

" I'm sure of it. When some big event has just taken place—a murder or something—people will often say—just in fun, of course—that they've done it. It's just a silly kind of joke."

Elizabeth stopped speaking for a moment, and then said rather slowly, " D'you know, Colonel, if you don't mind my saying so, I believe you're inclined to take people too seriously. If you cast your mind back—can't you think of occasions when you've understood people too literally? "

" Well, you know, my dear lady, my memory isn't as good as it was. So I can't cast the old mind back as far as I'd like, but perhaps you're right."

" I'm sure I am, Colonel. Of course—it doesn't matter in the normal way, but occasionally it might get people into trouble—In the first place, people don't confess to serious crimes to strangers or acquaintances. It doesn't make sense, does it? "

Elizabeth spent another hour working on the colonel, but she never once mentioned the case of Alec Morland. Before she left she said: " Colonel, it would be as well if you didn't mention this conversation to anyone. People might think I'd talked to you about the case."

" Not a word, dear lady. I might end up in prison too. Silly that one can't have an ordinary conversation without being frightened of going to gaol. But there it is, the law's an ass, dear lady."

Elizabeth left the colonel. She was a little exhausted by her efforts, but she had enough strength left to complete the remainder of the operation, which was to send an anonymous letter to Duffield. At the time she was posting it, he was in bed talking to his wife.

" But it sounds as though it's going really well," said Laura Duffield. " I can't think why you're so depressed."

" It is going well, in a way—except for that oaf, Colonel Brain. If only I could smash him, it would probably be all right, but it doesn't look as though I can."

" Surely no one's going to take too much notice of what he says? "

" Well—yes and no. You see—it's Alec I'm worrying about. With Colonel Brain's evidence I can't possibly submit that there's no case to answer. And once Alec goes into the box I think we'll be sunk."

"Why?"

"He's such a rotten liar."

"What d'you mean? Has he told you he's done it? I thought you couldn't defend him if he had."

"No, of course he hasn't. But if he's no better in the witness-box than he was when I cross-examined him at the prison, he's almost bound to go down."

In Morland's case, Duffield had cross-examined him very thoroughly indeed in the room in the prison in which he interviewed him. He was really appalled at the result. Morland's explanations of all his movements were not only sometimes lame in themselves, but were given so lamely that it was extremely difficult to believe in them. He was, naturally, desperately anxious to be acquitted, but the lies he would have to tell not only stuck in his throat but made fairly obvious swellings which Duffield was afraid the jury would not be able to help observing.

"Perhaps he'll do better than you expect," said Laura.

"He can't do worse. The chap's too honest, that's the trouble. D'you know, I believe for two pins he'd say he'd done it. If only I could get the jury to stop the case before he gets into the box. I thought I should at one time, but this idiot of a colonel sticks to his story. If Alec's hanged, it may well be due to my cross-examination of Colonel Brain."

"It sounds awful. *If Alec's hanged.* D'you really think he will be?"

"Nothing's certain, but unless a miracle happens, he'll have to go into the box—and then, unless there's another miracle, he'll go down. Well, I must go to sleep, or I won't be fit to cross-examine the colonel or anything. Good night, my darling."

When Duffield got up next morning, there was an anonymous letter for him. It gave him a few simple words of advice. He decided to take them.

At the Assize Court, Pomeroy was chatting to Duffield just before they went in.

"I'd like to see your chap get away with it," he said.

"So would he," said Duffield.

"It should be over today, I suppose. Depends how many witnesses you're calling."

"I'm not sure," said Duffield.

"You're going to open the case, then?"

"That's the one certain thing. I'm going to open the case."

"You don't want the last word, then?"

"I do, indeed."

"Don't follow, old boy."

In criminal cases, counsel for the defence has the right to make his final speech to the jury after the prosecution, if he calls no witnesses other than the prisoner or witnesses as to character only, but, in that case, he is not entitled to address the jury before calling his evidence. Pomeroy could not, therefore, understand how

Duffield could say that he intended to open the case—and, at the same time, say that he wanted the last word.

They walked into court and, as soon as the judge and jury were in their places, the colonel went back into the witness-box.

"You are still on oath, Colonel," said the judge. "Has anyone spoken to you about the case since yesterday?"

"No one, my Lord. I could swear to that, if necessary."

"You have sworn to it, Colonel."

"My memory isn't as good as it was, my Lord. I thought that was yesterday."

"I have just told you that you are still on oath."

"I thought that was a figure of speech, my Lord. I often say that kind of thing myself. The other day, for instance, I said to my housekeeper, 'I would take an oath on that,' I said—it was something about being late—I forget the details—but I don't suppose your Lordship would want them—"

"Colonel, I was reminding you that you took an oath yesterday to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Nothing but the truth," said the colonel solemnly. "I hope I haven't made a mistake anywhere."

"I hope not, too, Colonel."

"That's very good of your Lordship."

"And I asked you if you'd discussed the case with anyone since yesterday, and you said you could swear you hadn't."

"That's right, my Lord. Shall I take the oath?"

"I had just reminded you, Colonel, that you took the oath yesterday."

"Oh yes, my Lord. But not today."

"The oath continues, Colonel. It is unnecessary to take it again."

"Of course, if your Lordship says so, but I haven't taken it today, my Lord."

"Let the witness be sworn again," said the judge. "I've had enough of this nonsense."

After the colonel had taken the oath, the judge asked him again: "Have you spoken about the case to anyone since yesterday?"

"No, my Lord, I can swear to that."

"You *are* on oath, Colonel."

"I know, my Lord, that's why I said I could swear to it."

"Will you continue your cross-examination, please, Mr. Duffield?"

"Colonel Brain," said Duffield, "this conversation you had with the prisoner, in which you allege that he said, 'I'll give you the opportunity'—d'you think it can have been in the nature of a joke?"

To Elizabeth, listening, it seemed an age before the colonel answered the question.

But at last he did so.

"*In the nature of a joke*, did you say, sir?"

The case for the prosecution ended not long before the luncheon adjournment, but there was time for Duffield to begin his speech.

" Members of the jury," he said, " you have been listening for some time—and no doubt with the greatest care—to a case which may well be unexampled in the history of the criminal courts. A man is charged with the crime of saving life—but the name given to that crime in this Court is murder. Now, let me say this at once. My learned friend, with his usual fairness, has pointed out to you that the object of this crime—for unquestionably the killing of Gilbert Essex, criminal though he was and a bestial criminal at that, was a crime—the object of this crime is irrelevant to a consideration of your verdict.

" He has said to you that the only question you have to consider is whether the prisoner killed Essex or not. May I—with my usual fairness—say that I certainly agree with him? However well-intentioned the object of the killing may have been, it has nothing to do with the case—unless, indeed, it could, in certain circumstances, be said to weigh against the prisoner.

" By that I mean this—if you think the prisoner had a motive for killing Essex—albeit, in one sense, an excellent motive—to save the lives of women whom the dead man would undoubtedly have killed if he himself had not been killed—then the prosecution will have shown—what they have no need to show, but which, of course, they may show if they can—a motive for this crime.

" There was a motive for the crime—a motive, I suppose, which could be present in the minds of all the adult population in this country who knew of the crimes of Gilbert Essex and of the inability of the police to check them. Some of you—indeed, possibly all of you—may have said to yourselves at one time or another: ' Something must be done to stop these murders. It can't go on like this. I wish I could do something myself. I pray that I may read in the papers that he has been caught. No woman will be safe until he is.'

" Members of the jury, your prayers were answered. Gilbert Essex will kill no more."

" Mr. Duffield," interrupted the judge, " I am always loath to intervene when counsel is addressing the jury, but there is a limit, you know. You are not entitled to tempt the jury to acquit the accused just because good may have resulted from the crime."

" My Lord," said Duffield, " I was just about to say that. I was just about to say, members of the jury, that I am not asking you to acquit my client out of thankfulness or any similar motives. *If Alec Morland killed Gilbert Essex—though his motives were the best in the world—you must say that he is guilty—and he must die.* It is not for you or me to consider the consequences of your verdict.

" In due course, members of the jury, I shall—if necessary—if necessary, call the prisoner and other evidence, but at every stage of this trial it is for the prosecution to prove its case. It is not for the accused to prove his innocence.

" So then, members of the jury, granting as I do, without the slightest qualification, that the only question you have to decide is whether this prisoner killed this murderer, I propose to examine

with you, if you will bear with me, the evidence which the Crown has called to establish his guilt.

" And I am going to do so at this stage, members of the jury, because you have now heard the whole of the evidence upon which the Crown relies—and it is open to you, at any moment—now—if you are so minded—to say that, even without a word from the prisoner, you are not satisfied of his guilt and that this nightmare which he has been enduring here so long should end—*and should end now.*

" I cannot think that anyone of you will believe that a verdict of Not Guilty in this case will result in people taking the law into their own hands.

" At this stage, you may well care to examine in some detail the evidence for the prosecution. During the adjournment which will shortly follow, you may well think it worth while to see on what evidence it is that the Crown says that this accused is guilty of murder.

" I venture to suggest to you that, when you do examine that evidence, you will find that it is lamentably—well, perhaps lamentably is not at all the right word for me to use—splendidly is more appropriate for counsel for the defence to use—is not the evidence splendidly lacking in that degree of proof necessary for conviction on a criminal charge—even a much lesser one than murder? As my learned friend has told you—very fairly—suspicion is not enough. Proof is required—and what proof is there?

" I submit to you, members of the jury, that there is none. When you examine the evidence, I suggest to you that there is none at all—none at all. There are, if you like, grounds for suspicion now and then, but, in my submission, that is putting the case for the prosecution at the highest.

" Gilbert Essex was killed by being struck on the head. Who saw him struck on the head? No one. Who heard him cry out? No one. But there was someone near, you know—the witness Rose Lee. There was someone who might have identified my client as the man who killed Essex, but she didn't.

" But, members of the jury, Rose Lee did hear someone speak. And here I agree with my learned friend, there can be little doubt but that the man she heard speak was the man who in fact did the killing. Well—did she recognize my client's voice as the voice she heard? As you know, she did not.

" When she heard *Voice B*, my client's voice, she said—it is well within your recollection—she said that she did not think that was the voice. Well, members of the jury, what more do you want? You might have thought she was a witness for the defence. The prosecution have to prove it was my client's voice and the best they can do is to call someone who thinks it was *not*.

" There's proof for you, members of the jury! There's evidence to convict a man of murder! Would you convict a man of proved bad character on such evidence? Of course you wouldn't. Then, what about my client, whose character you know?

" Members of the jury, I am inviting you here and now to stop this case—to stop the agony for my client and his wife and friends. But I don't ask you to do that out of hand—but only after thinking of every piece of evidence the prosecution have been able to bring."

Duffield then proceeded to go through all the evidence called against the prisoner. " And now, members of the jury," he went on, " I come to the evidence of Colonel Brain, a witness who, I don't suggest for a moment, has come here to tell you anything which he does not believe to be the truth—when he can remember it. And what did his evidence come to, after all? That conversation between him and the prisoner, that conversation which my learned friend opened to you as an admission of guilt—what did it turn out to be but just a joke? A silly jest, perhaps—but not an admission of guilt. I suggest to you it doesn't bear thinking about."

" I think," interrupted the judge, " this will be a convenient moment to adjourn for lunch."

" If your Lordship pleases."

" My Lord," said Mr. Kingsdown, a young barrister who had not so far taken any part in the proceedings, " would it be convenient to your Lordship to mention the case of Ambrose Low before your Lordship rises? "

" Certainly not, Mr. Kingsdown," said his Lordship, and rose.

" Would you mind passing the horseradish sauce, please? " said the foreman of the jury to the neighbour on his left, a middle-aged, inoffensive little man. He was apparently shy and retiring and had hardly exchanged a word with any of his fellows during the three days of the trial. Nothing happened.

" The horseradish sauce, please," the foreman repeated. Still nothing happened.

" I'm sorry to trouble you," said the foreman more loudly, " but might I have the horseradish sauce? "

As the inoffensive little man still did nothing, and the foreman's voice could now be heard right down the table, the jurywoman on the left of the inoffensive-looking man said to him, " Excuse me, but could you pass the horseradish sauce to your right? "

The inoffensive little man apparently came out of his dreams. " I'm so sorry," he said, turning to the jurywoman, " did you say something? " The foreman, seeing that his neighbour was now awake, repeated his request quietly. But his neighbour took no notice and continued to look expectantly at the jurywoman.

A sudden and dreadful thought came into the foreman's mind. Speaking in a normal voice, he said: " You're not deaf, by any chance? " The juryman addressed took no notice. The foreman touched him on the shoulder and said to him loudly: " You're not deaf, by any chance? "

" Eh—what's that? Deaf—yes—I'm afraid I am rather."

There was complete silence in the room.

Hands, with knives or forks in them, remained in the air, mouths remained closed or open. Movement and mastication were tem-

porarily suspended. After a moment, the foreman said, fairly loudly, but in a voice which did not conceal his anxiety, "Have you heard anything that's happened in Court?"

"Oh yes—" began the man, and the foreman and his fellow jurors started to relax—but all too soon. "A little," went on the inoffensive-looking man.

The anxiety returned.

Everyone had the same thought. How could they tell the judge, after three days, that one of the jury had only heard a little of what had been going on? It did not require much imagination to visualize the judge's reaction.

"For heaven's sake," said the foreman, "why didn't you say you couldn't hear?"

"I beg your pardon?" said the inoffensive-looking man.

The foreman repeated the question loudly.

"I didn't like to," was the answer. "I'm a bit shy about it, I suppose."

"What about your oath?" said the man opposite. "You swore to give a true verdict according to the evidence. How can you do that if you haven't heard it?"

"Well," said the inoffensive-looking man, uncomfortably, "there's only one of me and I thought that, if you all thought alike, I couldn't do much harm in agreeing with you, and if you didn't all think alike, it wouldn't matter what I thought, as we've got to be unanimous. I have heard some of the evidence. It's about a murder, isn't it?"

"This is terrible," said the foreman. "What are we to do?"

"Isn't it about a murder?" persisted the inoffensive-looking man. "I felt sure it was. And, anyway, I know it is because I read it in the papers."

"Well—that's something," said a juryman. "He has read the papers."

"No," said the inoffensive-looking man, "I haven't. I thought we weren't supposed to. But I saw a headline about a murder case. I suppose it is this one. I felt sure it was."

"Well—all we can do is to tell him about it now," said the foreman, "if you agree. I'm hanged if I'm going to tell the judge that one of us hasn't heard anything. He'd eat us alive. D'you all agree to that?"

The suggestion was carried unanimously.

"Now, listen," said the foreman. "We're going to tell you what the evidence is."

"Thank you," said the inoffensive-looking man. "I'm very sorry to be a trouble to you."

"Trouble!" said the foreman. "D'you realize a man's life's at stake?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Give me patience," said the foreman. "Now, look, everyone. I can't shout it all at him. I suggest we take it in turns. Suppose we all take a witness and, when one's finished, the others can add

anything he's left out. What d'you say to that?" They said it was about as good as could be expected in the circumstances.

"We'd better hurry with lunch and get on with it," said the foreman.

"Would anyone like the horseradish sauce?" said the inoffensive-looking man.

They finished their lunch and began to repeat the evidence as best they could, but it soon appeared that they would not have time to complete the process before they were due back in court again.

"I've an idea," said a juryman. "Can't we say that we're considering what counsel for the defence has been saying?"

"About what?"

"About stopping the case."

"But I don't want to stop the case, anyway," said a juryman, who had not intervened in the discussion up to that moment. "I'm interested."

"Interested!" snorted another.

"Yes—and why shouldn't I be? If you did what I do all day, you might like a change. Don't often get a chance like this, I can tell you. And I'm not ashamed of saying so."

"Forgive me, gentlemen," said the foreman, "but, at the moment, we only want an excuse for a little more time to tell the evidence to Mr.—Mr.—" and he raised his voice loudly and looked questioningly at the deaf man.

"Greene's my name," said the deaf man, "with three e's, if you don't mind."

"You don't pronounce the last e, surely?" said a juryman.

"I beg your pardon?" said Mr. Greene.

"Gentlemen, please," said the foreman, "we shall get into trouble if we don't get this settled soon. We only want time *to tell Mr. Greene the evidence.* We're not trying to stop the case."

After some little time, the usher came to the Clerk of the Court.

"There's an awful noise going on in the jury room, sir," he said. "They seem to be shouting at one another. Almost as though there were going to be a fight."

"Did you hear what they were saying?"

"Oh, of course not, sir. I was careful to go away so that I couldn't. But I've never heard such a noise from a jury yet."

"Well, you mustn't talk to them, but you might just put your head in and see if it's all right."

"Very good, sir," said the usher.

He had not exaggerated the noise. The process of one person yelling at Mr. Greene was loud enough, but often some juryman would disagree with the way the evidence was being put and would intervene loudly. It was no good intervening any other way. Consequently, from time to time, the noise sounded like a shouting-match. And that's what it was, really.

The foreman had just said very loudly: "He threw him over the

cliff," and another juryman had immediately followed with: " Who threw him over the cliff? " and a third: " That's what we're here to find out," when there was a knock at the door, and the usher came in. The noise immediately ceased. He looked round the room, but said nothing.

" Yes? " said the foreman. " Anything you want? "

The usher said nothing, but looked round the room to see if there were any signs of fighting. He found none and, without saying a word, withdrew.

After twenty minutes, they had got as far as the evidence of Colonel Brain.

" The point is," shouted a juryman, " that there wasn't any real admission. It was just a joke. Colonel Brain said so himself."

" What other evidence is there? " asked Mr. Greene.

" What more d'you want? " said a juryman. " He threw him over the cliff. If that isn't murder, I don't know what is."

" You mean someone threw him over the cliff? There's no evidence that it was the prisoner."

" Then why is he in the dock? He wouldn't be there unless he'd thrown him over."

" You're implying that everyone who stands in the dock is guilty."

" Really! " said a juryman indignantly. " There doesn't seem much object in having a judge or jury if that's the right point of view. Just chop their heads off and be done with it."

" There's no need to be offensive."

" I'm not being in the least offensive, but to hear someone who's sworn to try a case well and truly express the view that there's really nothing to try is rather alarming. This isn't a police state, you know."

" Please, gentlemen," said the foreman, " we've a lot to do. Could you reserve this discussion till we're considering our verdict? All we're doing now is telling Mr. Greene the evidence."

While the jury were thus engaged, Mr. Kingsdown thought it might give him an opportunity to mention the matter of Ambrose Low again. This time he was more successful.

" How did your client know that Colonel Brain's evidence was wrong? " asked the judge.

" Because he had spoken to him, my Lord. If your Lordship would allow my client to give evidence, he has been brought from prison and is available."

" Very well," said the judge. " Undoubtedly Colonel Brain is an unusual type of witness. I will hear what your client has to say."

" First, my Lord," said Mr. Low, " I would like to offer to your Lordship my very humble apologies for doing something which I realize was wrong, though I do assure your Lordship my object was only to persuade the witness to tell the truth."

" You say that your object was in furtherance of justice? " said the judge.

" To try to persuade the witness to tell the truth."

" That's the same thing," said the judge.

" If your Lordship pleases," said Mr. Low.

" Well," said the judge, " Colonel Brain did unquestionably give a very different account of his interview with the prisoner in cross-examination from what he said in examination-in-chief. And it is true to say that he swore he had spoken to no one about the case. Personally, I am prepared to accept that. He was not the easiest of witnesses, but he did not appear to me to be untruthful. In these circumstances, it seems to me that I can take a more lenient view of your behaviour than I thought possible before. In all the circumstances, I am prepared to order your immediate release."

" I am most grateful to your Lordship," said Mr. Low.

" I am very much obliged, my Lord," said Mr. Kingsdown.

" Very well then. I will rise now until the jury is ready."

Meanwhile, in the jury room the last piece of evidence had been shouted at Mr. Greene.

" Just in time," said the foreman. " I'll ring for the usher."

" But I don't understand," said Mr. Greene. " I thought the prisoner was charged with murder. I haven't heard any evidence that he did it yet. Perhaps I missed something."

" Well—if you did," shouted the foreman, " it wasn't our fault. We've all shouted till we're hoarse."

" You haven't told me what counsel's been saying."

" He's been telling us to stop the case," said the man who was interested. " But I want to hear some more."

" Telling us to drop the case? "

" *Stop* the case," shouted the man who was interested.

" All right," said Mr. Greene, " I agree."

" But I don't."

" I beg your pardon? "

" *I don't.*"

" Why not? " asked Mr. Greene. " Even I know they've got to prove the case. And, if they haven't, that's an end of it, surely. Or do you think they have proved it? "

" No, I wouldn't say that," said the man who was interested, " but I'd like to hear what the prisoner has to say. I've never heard one before."

" But surely, if they haven't proved the case and you've sworn to try it according to the evidence, you just have to say *Not Guilty*."

" I thought you wanted to say *Guilty*."

" Well, that was before I'd thought about it properly. But, listening to everything that was told to Mr. Greene, it didn't seem to come to very much."

The usher came in. " Are you ready? " he asked.

A few minutes later the jury were back in Court. Everyone waited expectantly for the foreman to say something. Even the judge looked at them for a moment, but, as the foreman remained seated, he turned his head towards counsels' seats and said: " Very well, Mr. Duffield, you had better continue."

Very disappointed that he had not yet succeeded in persuading the jury to stop the case, Duffield was determined to make a final effort to keep his opening address going until the adjournment. He also decided not to indicate by one word what his defence was going to be. It was a formidable task to talk to the jury for two hours on a subject he had already dealt with pretty thoroughly.

He looked along the two lines of the jury, trying to see if he could single out either one of the jury who was against him or one of them who would carry on his advocacy for him in the jury room. It is not unusual for counsel to select, and make his speech to a juryman who looks intelligent, attentive, and likely to carry weight with the remainder of the jury when they are considering their verdict. But, of course, counsel may make a mistake in his selection. Even the most experienced counsel can do this. As did Duffield in this case.

Looking carefully at each of the jury before he began, he decided to choose Mr. Greene. Mr. Greene soon became aware that counsel was talking at him and did his best to hear and lip-read, but with little success. But his efforts made him appear so particularly attentive that Duffield felt sure he had made a good choice.

The result was that the unfortunate Mr. Greene had to sit stiff and uncomfortable and trying to look intelligent for the remainder of the afternoon. The rest of the jury started to get restless; even the man who was interested regretted, if ever so slightly, that they hadn't stopped the case and gone away, but he comforted himself with the thought that there was the prisoner to come, and he bore the ordeal as manfully as he could.

At five o'clock, the judge intervened, " Will you be much longer, Mr. Duffield? "

" Not more than an hour or so, my Lord."

" Really," said the judge. " There must be some limit to this. I shall have to consider whether I can allow you to go on in the morning. Perhaps you will consider, too, over the adjournment, whether it's likely to help your client much."

The Court adjourned.

As Mr. Low and Elizabeth left the court, Jill Morland came up.

" I'm so sorry to trouble you," she said unhappily, " but—but could you— " but Mr. Low interrupted before she could finish.

" Can I tell you what will happen tomorrow? " he said. " Yes, I can. Your husband will be acquitted and you and he will live happily ever after. Provided, of course, he doesn't do it again."

" D'you mean that? " said Jill.

" Of course I do. Dry your eyes and have a good night. It'll be all right tomorrow. You'll see."

Jill tried to thank him, but could not, and went hurriedly away to burst into tears of relief.

" That was very wrong of you, Ambrose," said Elizabeth, when Jill was out of earshot. " You can't possibly know what'll happen tomorrow and, if things go wrong, the poor girl will be distracted."

Meanwhile, the man who was interested was on his way home in

an omnibus. " Wonder what they'll do," said the man next to him, who was looking at a paper. " Why did the jury have a confab, d'you think? "

" I'm on the jury," said the man who was interested, " and I can't tell you."

" On the jury? That must be exciting."

" Just a matter of doing one's duty, old man."

" But you must get a thrill out of being there all the time and seeing everything—the judge and lawyers and witnesses, and having a man's life in your hands."

" That's not the way I look at it. Have you ever had a man's life in your hands? "

" Can't say that I have."

" Well, wait till you have, before you talk of it being exciting."

He got out at the next stop and soon reached his home. He was happily married, but his wife and he were not demonstratively affectionate. " Hullo, Liz," he said.

" Hullo, Bert. You back? "

" Yes," he said and flopped into the armchair.

" How many times have I got to tell you about those springs? " said his wife.

" If you did what I do all day—" began her husband.

" I know, I know," said his wife. " Well, for one thing, you haven't been doing it all day. You've been sitting comfortably listening to a case. How's it going, by the way—? "

" Can't tell you the secrets of the jury room."

" Did I ask you to? I can see in the paper, if I want to."

" Well, as a matter of fact, but don't let it go any further, it's eleven to one at the moment. And I'm the one. The others want to stop the case and let him off."

" And you want to convict him."

" I wouldn't say that, but it's another thing to stop the case in the middle."

" Well, you stick to your principles," said his wife. " Don't you give way to clamour."

The next morning, the jury were in their places some ten minutes before the judge arrived. They took the opportunity of having a whispered conversation. As soon as the judge had entered and the case had been called, Duffield got up to continue his speech. The judge looked at him and began to speak. In consequence, neither of them noticed that the foreman had stood up too.

" Mr. Duffield," said the judge, " I've been considering this matter overnight. Although, naturally, substantial licence is allowed to counsel for the defence, there must come a time when I have the right to intervene. Otherwise, theoretically, you might go on talking for ever."

At that moment Duffield felt his gown pulled by his next-door neighbour, who pointed out the foreman to him.

" My Lord," said Duffield, " the foreman of the jury appears to

want to address your Lordship." The judge turned his head. "Yes, Mr. Foreman?" he said. "Do you want to say something?"

"My Lord," said the foreman, "the jury would like to stop the case, with your Lordship's permission, and find the prisoner *Guilty*."

"Mr. Foreman," began the judge sternly. He was about to tell the jury that they were acting in a most improper way and to say that the trial could not possibly go on before such an unfair set of people, and that there would have to be a new trial.

"I mean *Not Guilty*," said the foreman.

"Well—which do you mean?" said the judge.

"Oh—*Not Guilty*, my Lord. I got a little confused. I haven't done this before, I'm afraid, and I was a little tensed up."

"I see," said the judge. "Well—we'd better make quite certain."

The judge spoke to the clerk, who then addressed the jury.

"Members of the jury," he said "are you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We are."

"Do you find the prisoner Alec Morland *Not Guilty*, and is that the verdict of you all?"

"*We do and it is*," said the foreman.

"You are discharged," said the judge to Alec.

The cheering which threatened to break out in the court was sternly suppressed, and: "Call the next case," said the judge.

Soon, in the corridor outside the court, there was a confused mass of people all trying to shake hands with Alec and Jill Morland. After a short time, the police managed to make a path for them to leave the Assize Court. Elizabeth Low put her car at their disposal and they drove away amid considerable cheering.

After she had recovered some composure, Jill said, "It really is you, isn't it? And you're free, and we're safe for ever. Shall I wake up suddenly? Tell me it's true."

"It's true, my darling," Alec said, and kissed her.

The man who was interested reached home an hour after the verdict. "You're back early," said his wife. "How come?"

"We stopped the case."

"I thought you wouldn't agree."

"Well—I thought it over on the way to court—and, as it was eleven to one against me and he was bound to get off in the end anyway, I thought I'd give in." He hesitated. "Besides, between you and me, I rather wanted to get back to my job."

★ *Readers of Henry Cecil's books will remember Colonel Brain, and also Ambrose Low, who plays a leading part in "No Bail for the Judge." The author's expert legal knowledge is again displayed in his most amusing manner in his new book, "Brothers in Law."*

★ SCIENCE FICTION CHOICE

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

A silver globe floated into the night like a lotus drifting on a lake

by JACK VANCE

CAPTAIN HESS placed a notebook on the desk, and hauled a chair up under his sturdy buttocks. Pointing to the notebook, he said, " That's the property of your man Evans. He left it aboard the ship."

Galispell said in faint surprise, " There was nothing else? No letter? We haven't heard a word from him."

" No, sir, not a thing. That notebook was all he had when we picked him up."

Galispell rubbed his fingers along the scarred fibres of the cover. " It's understandable, I suppose, when you consider what he'd been through." He flipped back the cover. " Hmm."

Hess said tentatively, " I suppose—you've always thought of Evans as—well, rather a strange chap? "

" Howard Evans? No, not at all. He's been a very valuable man to us." He considered Captain Hess reflectively. " Exactly how do you mean ' strange? ' "

Hess frowned, searching for the precise picture of Evans's behaviour. " I guess you might say erratic, or maybe emotional."

Galispell was genuinely startled. " Howard Evans? "

Hess's eyes went to the notebook. " I took the liberty of looking through his log, and—well—"

" And you got the impression he was—strange."

Hess flushed stubbornly. " Maybe everything he writes is true. But I've been poking into odd corners of space all my life, and I've never seen anything like it."

" Peculiar situation," said Galispell in a neutral voice.

He looked thoughtfully at the notebook.

Journal of Howard Charles Evans

I am starting this journal without pessimism but certainly without optimism. I feel as if I have already died once. My time in the lifeboat was at least a foretaste of death. I flew on and

on through the dark, and a coffin could be only slightly more cramped. The stars were above, below, ahead, astern. I have no clock, and I can put no duration to my drifting. It was more than a week, it was less than a year.

There is much to tell and many ways of telling. There is myself, my own response to this rather dramatic situation. But lacking the knack for tracing the contours and contortions of my psyche, I shall try to detail events as objectively as possible.

I landed the lifeboat on as favourable a spot as I had opportunity to select. I tested the atmosphere, temperature, pressure, and biology; then I ventured outside. I rigged an antenna and dispatched my first SOS.

Shelter is no problem; the lifeboat serves me as a bed and, if necessary, a refuge. From sheer boredom later on I may fell a few of these trees and build a house. But I shall wait; there is no urgency. A stream of pure water trickles past the lifeboat; I have abundant concentrated food. As soon as the hydroponic tanks begin to produce, there will be fresh fruit and vegetables and yeast proteins—survival seems no particular problem.

The sun is a ball of dark crimson, and casts hardly more light than the full moon on Earth. The lifeboat rests on a meadow of thick black-green creeper, very pleasant underfoot. A hundred yards distant, in the direction I shall call south, lies a lake of inky water, and the meadow slopes smoothly down to the water's edge. Tall sprays of rather pallid vegetation—I had better use the word " trees "—bound the meadow on either side.

Behind is a hillside, which possibly continues into a range of mountains; I can't be sure. This dim red light makes vision uncertain after the first few hundred feet.

The whole effect is one of haunted desolation and peace. I would enjoy the beauty of the situation if it were not for the uncertainties of the future.

The breeze drifts across the lake, smelling pleasantly fragrant, and it carries a whisper of sound from off the waves.

I have assembled the hydroponic tanks, and set out cultures of yeast. I shall never starve nor die of thirst. The lake is smooth and inviting; perhaps in time I shall build a little boat. The water is warm, but I dare not swim. What could be more terrible than to be seized from below and dragged under?

There is probably no basis for my misgivings. I have seen no animal life of any kind: no birds, fish, insects, crustacea. The world is one of absolute quiet, except for the whispering breeze.

The scarlet sun hangs in the sky, remaining in place during many of my sleeps. I see it is slowly westering; after this long day, how long and how monotonous will be the night!

I have sent off four SOS sequences; somewhere a monitor station must catch them.

A machete is my only weapon, and I have been reluctant to venture far from the lifeboat. Today—if I may use the word—I took my courage in my hands and started around the lake. The trees are rather like birches, tall and supple.

I think the bark and leaves would shine a clear silver in light other than this wine-coloured gloom. Along the lake shore they stand in line, almost as if long ago they had been planted by a wandering gardener. The tall branches sway in the breeze, glinting scarlet with purple overtones, a strange and wonderful picture which I am alone to see.

I have heard it said that enjoyment of beauty is magnified in the presence of others: that a mysterious rapport comes into play to reveal subtleties which a single mind is unable to grasp. Certainly, as I walked along the avenue of trees with the lake and the scarlet sun behind, I would have been grateful for companionship—but I believe that something of the peace, the sense of walking in an ancient, abandoned garden, would be lost.

The lake is shaped like an hour-glass; at the narrow waist I could look across and see the squat shape of the lifeboat. I sat down under a bush, which continually nodded red and black flowers in front of me. Mist fibrils drifted across the lake and the wind made low musical sounds.

I rose to my feet and continued around the lake. I passed through forests and glades and came once more to my lifeboat.

I went to tend my hydroponic tanks, and I think the yeast has been disturbed, prodded at curiously.

The dark red sun is sinking. Every day—it must be clear that I use ' day ' as the interval between my sleeps—finds it lower in the sky. Night is almost upon me, long night. How shall I spend my time in the dark?

I have no gauge other than my mind, but the breeze seems colder. It brings long, mournful chords to my ears, very sad, very sweet. Mist-wraiths go fleeting across the meadow.

Wan stars already show themselves, nameless ghost-lamps without significance.

I have been considering the slope behind my meadow; tomorrow I think I shall make the ascent . . .

I have plotted the position of every article I possess. I shall be gone some hours, and if a visitor meddles with my goods, I shall know his presence for certain.

The sun is low, the air pinches at my cheeks. I must hurry if I wish to return while light still shows me the landscape.

I picture myself lost; I see myself wandering the face of this world, groping for my precious lifeboat, my tanks, my meadow.

Anxiety, curiosity, obstinacy all spurring me, I set off up the slope at a half-trot.

Becoming winded almost at once, I slowed my pace. The turf of the lake shore had disappeared; I was walking on bare rocks and lichen. Below me the meadow became a patch, my lifeboat a gleaming spindle. I watched for a moment. Nothing stirred anywhere in my range of vision.

I continued up the slope and finally breasted the ridge. A vast rolling valley fell off below me. Across it rose a range of great mountains, rearing above me into the dark sky. The wine-coloured light slanting in from the west lit the prominences, the frontal sallies and bluffs, left the valleys in gloom, an alternate sequence of red and black, beginning far in the west, continuing past, far to the east.

I looked down behind me, down to my own meadow, and was hard put to find it in the fading light. Ah, there it was! And there, the lake. Beyond was dark forest, then a strip of old-rose savanna, then a dark strip of woodland, then delicate laminae of colourings to the horizon.

The sun touched the edge of the mountains, and with what seemed almost a sudden lurch, fell half below the horizon. I turned down-slope; a terrible thing to be lost in the dark. My eye fell upon a white object, a hundred yards along the ridge. I stared, and walked nearer.

Gradually it assumed form: a thimble, a cone, a pyramid—a cairn of white rocks. I walked forward with feet achingly heavy.

A cairn, certainly. I stood looking down on it.

I turned, looked swiftly over my shoulder. Nothing in view. I looked down to the meadow. Swift shapes? I strained through the gathering murk. Nothing.

I tore at the cairn, threw rocks aside. What was below? Nothing.

In the ground a faintly marked rectangle, three feet long, was perceptible. I stood back. No power I knew could induce me to dig into that soil.

The sun was disappearing. Already at the south and north the afterglow began, lees of wine: the sun moved with astounding rapidity. What manner of sun was this, dawdling at the meridian, plunging below the horizon?

I turned down-slope, but darkness came faster. The scarlet sun was gone; in the west was a sad sketch of departed flame. I stumbled, I fell. I looked into the east. A marvellous zodiacal light was forming, a strengthening blue triangle.

I watched, from my hands and knees. A cusp of bright blue lifted into the sky. A moment later a flood of sapphire washed the landscape. A new sun of intense indigo rose into the sky.

The world was the same, yet different; where my eyes had been accustomed to red and the multitudinous shades of red, now I saw the intricate cycle of blue.

When I returned to my meadow, the breeze carried a new sound: bright allegro chords that my mind could almost form into melody. For a moment I so amused myself, and thought to see dance-motion in the wisps of vapour which for the last few days had been noticeable over my meadow.

In what I shall call a peculiar frame of mind, I crawled into the lifeboat and went to sleep.

I crawled, blinking, out of the lifeboat into an electric world. I listened. Surely that was music—faint whispers drifting in on the wind like a fragrance.

I went down to the lake, as blue as a ball of that cobalt dye so aptly known as blueing. The music came louder; I caught snatches of melody—sprightly quick-step phrases carried on a flowing legato like coloured tinsel.

I put my hands to my ears; if I were experiencing auditory hallucinations, the music would continue. The sound—if it were music—diminished, but did not fade entirely; my test was not definitive. But I felt sure it was real.

And where music was, there must be musicians . . . I ran forward, shouted, " Hullo! "

" Hullo! " came the echo from across the lake.

The music faded a moment, as a chorus of crickets quiets when disturbed, then gradually I could hear it again—distant music, " horns of Elfland faintly blowing."

It went completely out of perception. I was left standing, haggard in the blue light, alone on my meadow.

I washed my face, returned to the lifeboat, sent out another set of SOS signals.

Possibly the blue day is shorter than the red day; with no clock, I can't be sure. But with my new fascination, the music and its source, the blue day seems to pass more swiftly.

Never have I caught sight of the musicians. Is the sound generated by the trees, by diaphanous insects crouching out of my vision?

One day, I glanced across the lake and, wonder of wonders, a gay town spread along the opposite shore! After a first dumbfounded gaze, I ran down to the water's edge, stared as if it were the most precious sight of my life.

Pale silk swayed and rippled: pavilions, tents, fantastic edifices . . . Who inhabited these places? I waded knee-deep into the lake, the breath catching and creaking in my throat, and thought to see flitting shapes.

I ran like a madman round the shore. Plants with pale blue blossoms succumbed to my feet; I left the trail of an elephant through a patch of delicate reeds.

And when I came, panting and exhausted, to the shore opposite my meadow, what was there? Nothing.

The city had vanished like a dream, like spectres blown on a wind. I sat down on a rock. Music came clear for an instant, as if a door had momentarily opened.

I jumped to my feet. Nothing to be seen. I looked back across the lake. There—on my meadow—a host of gauzy shapes moved like mayflies over a still pond. When I returned, my meadow was vacant. The shore across the lake was bare.

So goes the blue day; and now there is fascination in my life. Whence comes the music? Who and what are these flitting shapes, never quite real but never entirely out of mind? Four times an hour I press a hand to my forehead, fearing the symptoms of a mind turning in on itself . . .

If music actually exists in this world, actually vibrates the air, why should it come to my ears as Earth music? These chords I hear might be struck on familiar instruments; the progressions and harmonies are not at all alien. And these pale plasmic wisps that I for ever seem to catch from the corner of my eye: the semblance and style is that of gay and playful humanity. The tempo of their movement is the tempo of the music: tarantella, saraband, farandole . . .

So goes the blue day. Blue air, blue-black turf, ultramarine water, and the bright blue star bent to the west. How long have I lived on this planet? I have broadcast the SOS sequence until now the batteries hiss with exhaustion; soon there will be an end to power. Food and water are no problem to me, but what use is a lifetime of exile in a world of blue and red?

The blue day is at its close. I would like to mount the slope and watch the glory of the blue sun's passing—but the remembrance of the red sunset still provokes a queasiness in my stomach. So I shall watch from my meadow, and then, if there is darkness, I shall crawl into the lifeboat like a bear into a cave, and await the coming of light.

The blue day goes. The sapphire sun wanders into the western forest, the sky looms to blue-black, the stars show like unfamiliar home-places.

For some time now I have heard no music; perhaps it has been so all-present that I neglect it.

The blue star is gone, the air chills. I think that deep night is on me indeed . . . I hear a throb of sound, plangent, plaintive; I turn my head. The east glows pale pearl. A silver globe floats up into the night like a lotus drifting on a lake: a great ball like six of Earth's full moons. Is this a sun, a satellite, a burnt-out star? What a freak of cosmology I have chanced upon!

The silver sun—I must call it a sun, although it casts a cool satin light—moves in an aureole-like oyster-shell. Once again the colour of the planet changes. The lake glistens like quicksilver, the trees are hammered metal . . . The silver star passes over a high rack of clouds, and the music seems to burst forth as if somewhere someone flung the curtains wide: the music of moonlight, medieval marble, piazzas with slim, fluted colonnades, soft, sighing strains that Claude Debussy might have conceived.

I wander down to the lake. Across on the opposite shore, once more I see the town. It seems clearer, more substantial; I note details that shimmered away to vagueness before—a wide terrace beside the lake, spiral pilasters, a row of decorative urns. The silhouette is, I think, the same as when I saw it under the blue sun: great silken tents, shimmering, reflecting cusps of light; pillars of carved stone, lucent as milk-glass; fantastic fixtures of no obvious purpose . . .

Barges drift along the dark quicksilver lake like moths, great sails bellying idly, the rigging a mesh of cobweb. Nodules of light, like fairy lanterns, hang on the stays, along the masts.

On sudden thought, I turn, look up to my own meadow. I see a row of booths as at an old-time fair, a circle of pale stone set in the turf, a host of filmy shapes.

Step by step, I edge towards my lifeboat. The music waxes, chords and structures of wonderful sweetness. I peer at one of the shapes, but the outlines waver. It moves to the emotion of the music—or does the motion of the shapes generate the music?

I run forward, shouting hoarsely. One of the shapes slips past me, and I look into a blur where a face might be. I come to a halt, panting hard; I stand on the marble circle. I stamp; it rings solid. I walk towards the booths—they seem to display complex things of pale cloth and dim metal—but as I look, my eyes mist over as with tears. The music goes far far away, my meadow lies bare and quiet. My feet press into the silver-black turf; in the sky hangs the silver-black star.

I am sitting with my back to the lifeboat, staring across the lake, which is still as a mirror. I have arrived at a set of theories.

My primary proposition is that I am sane—a necessary article

of faith; why bother even to speculate, otherwise? So—events occurring outside my own mind cause everything I have seen and heard. But—note this!—these sights and sounds do not obey the laws of classical science; in many respects they seem particularly subjective.

It must be, I tell myself, that both objectivity and subjectivity enter into the situation. I receive impressions which my brain finds unfamiliar and so translates to the concept most closely related. By this theory the inhabitants of this world are constantly close; I move unknowingly through their palaces and arcades; they dance incessantly around me.

As my mind gains sensitivity, I verge upon rapport with their way of life and I see them. More exactly, I sense something which creates an image in the visual region of my brain. Their emotions, the pattern of their life set up a kind of vibration which sounds in my brain as music . . . The reality of these creatures I am sure I shall never know. They are diaphane, I am flesh; they live in a world of spirit, I plod the turf with my heavy feet.

These last days I have neglected to broadcast the SOS. Small lack: the batteries are about done.

The silver sun is at the zenith, and leans westward. What comes next? Back to the red sun? Or darkness? Certainly this is no ordinary planetary system; the course of this world along its orbit must resemble one of the pre-Copernican epicycles.

I believe that my brain is gradually tuning into phase with this world, reaching a new high level of sensitivity. If my theory is correct, the *élan vital* of the native beings expresses itself in my brain as music. On Earth we would perhaps use the word telepathy . . .

So I am practising, concentrating, opening my consciousness wide to these new perceptions. Ocean mariners know a trick of never looking directly at a far light lest it strike the eyes' blind spot. I am using a similar device of never staring directly at any of the gauzy beings. I allow the image to establish itself, build itself up, and by this technique they appear quite definitely human. I sometimes think I can glimpse the features.

The women are like sylphs, achingly beautiful; the men—I have not seen one in detail, but their carriage, their form, is hauntingly familiar.

The music is always part of the background, just as the rustling of leaves is part of a forest. The mood of these creatures seems to change with their sun, so I hear interpretative music to suit. The red sun gave them passionate melancholy, the blue sun merriment. Under the silver star they are delicate, imaginative,

wistful, and in my mind sound the harmonies of Debussy's *La Mer* and his *Sirènes*.

The silver day is on the wane. Today I sat beside the lake, with the trees before me like a screen of silver filigree, watching the moth-barges drift back and forth. What is their function, I wonder? Can life such as this be translated in terms of economics, ecology, sociology? I doubt it. The word intelligence may not even enter the picture.

A portly barge sways near, with swamp-globes of orange and blue in the rigging, and I forget my hypotheses. I can never know the truth, and it is perfectly possible that these creatures are no more aware of me than I originally was aware of them.

Time goes by; I return to the lifeboat. A young woman-wraith whirls past. I pause, peer into her face; she tilts her head, her topaz eyes burn into mine, mocking, but not unkindly.

I try to send SOS—listlessly, because I suspect the batteries to be dank and dead. And indeed they are. The silver star shines like an enormous Christmas-tree bauble, round and glistening. It floats low, and once more I stand irresolute, expecting night.

The star falls; the forest receives it. In the darkness there is a peculiar cessation of sound. The music has dwindled, down through a series of wistful chords, a forlorn last cry . . .

A glow in the east, a green glow, spreading. Up rises a magnificent green sphere, the essence of all green, the tincture of emeralds, glowing as grass, fresh as mint, deep as the sea.

A throb of sound, music: rhythmical, strong music, swinging and veering. The green light floods the planet, and I prepare for the green day.

I am almost one with the native things. I wander among their pavilions, I pause by their booths to ponder their stuffs and wares: silken medallions, spangles and circlets of woven metal, cups of fluff and iridescent puff, puddles of colour and wafts of light-shot gauze. There are chains of green glass, each link shaped like a horseshoe; captive butterflies; spheres which seem to hold all the heavens, all the clouds, all the stars.

And to all sides of me go the flicker and flit of the dream people. The men are all vague, but familiar; the women turn on me smiles of ineffable provocation. But I shall drive myself mad with temptations; what I see is no more than the formulation of my own brain, an interpretation.

And this is tragedy, for there is one creature so unutterably lovely that whenever I see the shape that is she, my throat aches and I run forward, to peer into her eyes that are not eyes . . .

Today I clasped my arms around her, expecting yielding wisp.

Surprisingly, there was the feel of supple flesh. I kissed her, cheek, chin, mouth. Such a look of perplexity on the sweet face as I have never seen; heaven knows what strange act the creature thought me to be performing.

She went her way, but the music is strong and triumphant: the voice of cornets, the shudder of resonant bass below.

A man comes past; something in his stride, his posture plucks at my memory. I resolutely step forward; I will gaze into his face, I will plumb the vagueness.

He whirls past like a figure on a roundabout; he wears flapping ribbons of silk and pompons of spangled satin. I pound after him, I plant myself in his path. He strides past with a side-glance, and I stare into the rigid masklike face.

It is my own face.

He wears my face, he walks with my stride. He is me.

The green sun goes, and the music takes on depth. No cessation now; there is preparation, imminence . . . What is that other sound? A far spasm of something growling and clashing.

It fades out. The green sun goes down in a sky like a peacock's tail. The music is slow, exalted.

The west fades, the east glows. The music goes towards the east, to the great bands of rose, yellow, orange, lavender. Cloud-flecks burst into flame. A golden glow consumes the sky, north and south. The music takes on volume, a liturgical chanting. Up rises the new sun—a gorgeous golden ball. The music swells into a paean of light, fulfilment, regeneration . . . Hark! A second time the harsh sound grates across the music.

Into the sky, drifts the shape of a spaceship. It hovers over my meadow, the landing-jets come down like plumes.

The ship lands. I hear the mutter of voices—men's voices.

The music is vanished; the marble carvings, the tinsel booths, the wonderful silken cities are gone.

Galispell looked up, rubbed his chin. Captain Hess asked anxiously, " What do you think of it? "

Galispell said, " It's a strange document . . ." He looked for a moment out of the window. " What happened after you picked him up? Did you see any of these phenomena he talks about? "

" Not a thing." Captain Hess solemnly shook his big, round head. " Sure, the system was a fantastic gaggle of dark stars and fluorescent planets and burnt-out old suns; maybe all these things played havoc with his mind. He didn't seem too overjoyed to see us, that's a fact—just stood there, staring at us as if we were trespassers. ' We got your SOS,' I told him. ' Jump aboard! ' He came walking forward as if his feet were dead.

"Well, to make a long story short, he finally came aboard. We loaded on his lifeboat and took off. During the voyage back, he had nothing to do with anybody—just kept to himself, walking up and down the promenade. He had a habit of putting his hands to his head; one time I asked him if he was sick, if he wanted the medic to look him over. He said no, there was nothing wrong with him. That's about all I know of the man.

"We made Sun, and came down towards Earth. Personally, I didn't see what happened, because I was on the bridge, but this is what they tell me: as Earth got bigger and bigger, Evans began to act more restless than usual, wincing and turning his head back and forth. When we were about a thousand miles out, he gave a kind of furious jump.

"'The noise!' he yelled. '*The horrible noise!*'

"And with that he ran astern, jumped into his lifeboat, cast off, and they tell me he disappeared back the way we came.

"And that's all I've got to tell you, Mr. Galispell. It's too bad, after our taking all that trouble to get him, Evans decided to pull up stakes—but that's the way it goes."

"He took off back along your course?"

"That's right. If you're wanting to ask, could he have made the planet where we found him, the answer is, not likely."

"But there's a chance?" persisted Galispell.

"Oh, sure," said Captain Hess. "There's a chance."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DO YOU REMEMBER?

"Gentleman from Paris"
& "Invisible Weapon"

DID YOU READ?

"The Devil in Velvet"
& "The Bride of Newgate"

By JOHN DICKSON CARR

★

Now comes

BLACK SABRE

His new historical whodunit

IN NEXT MONTH'S ARGOSY

by CHRISTOPHER LANDON

THROUGH the great square hole in the *Tirpitz*'s deck plating Graustein's cynical voice echoed down to Heskin and Marianne, " Forgive me for removing your means of exit, but it was essential for me to receive a reply. Just in case there was a change in your plans, I followed you. And do you know how I managed that, Fru Bergman? "

There was no answer. The harsh voice went on, mocking from behind the white circle of light. " I had a microphone fixed outside your cabin porthole—that, by the way, is why my colleague Gleb slept on deck. It was most disappointing, playing back those recordings, Fru Bergman. As one of my friends said—not a word of love. But last night we had our first stroke of luck—we heard you were planning to leave, and we also learnt the useful fact that the police might show interest in your husband."

Heskin switched off his torch. " Can't we talk outside? " he said. " Let that rope down, Graustein, my wife has wrenched her ankle."

The light above was turned directly on Heskin. " So? The lady has hurt herself? That will make my idea all the more—"

In the darkness, close to Heskin, there was a moment's flash of pale flame before the magnified crack of the automatic. Heskin threw himself flat as the light above snapped out and the thunderous reverberation of the shots crashed down on them. The narrow confines spewed noise: the clang of impact, and the snarl of ricochets.

When the echoes died, the voice went on as before but it was no longer mocking. " I warned you about gun-play, Fru Bergman. That was over your heads, but next time it won't be. Now throw that gun out where I can see it. And yours, Bergman."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In a train crash in 1947, Heskin, a bank clerk on the run, seizes the chance to take over the identity and unknown Norwegian mission of the fatally injured Erik Bergman (whom he closely resembles) memorizing his dying words, "Under the Hornets' Nest. She has map, does not know where."

In Bergen, the lovely and mysterious contact, Marianne Rassmussen, a member of the Resistance, accepts Heskin as Bergman, but treats him with hostility. More and more attracted to Marianne, Heskin tells her the truth about himself, but she refuses to believe he is not Bergman.. When threatened by their mutual enemy, Graustein, Marianne poses as Heskin's wife.

As their steamer approaches Narvik, they learn that Graustein is coming aboard. In face of this new threat, Marianne tells Heskin the full story of their mission—On the eve of the German capitulation, four containers, brought by U-boat in great secrecy to Norway, had been hidden on the coast. These containers held papers of considerable value and historic importance—Hitler's highly secret archives of Russian-German relations during the uneasy alliance of 1939–41. Three men knew of the hiding of the documents: the first, the Nazi Commandant of a local concentration camp, later shot by vengeful Russian prisoners. (The presence of Graustein seems evidence that the Commandant had talked before he died.) The second, a Norwegian hostage from the camp, lured by a false offer of freedom, had acted as guide to the hiding-place and had never returned. His rough map had been smuggled out to Marianne. The third man was Erik Bergman, a Quisling.

Marianne watches Heskin, hoping he may betray himself as Bergman. She is determined to find the documents, sell them to Allied Intelligence, and revenge the Norwegian. On the chart, Heskin sees the point Hornsness, and suddenly realizes it is Bergman's "Hornets' Nest."

Graustein comes aboard, offers money for the documents and a time-limit for their reply. Heskin and Marianne escape at night by boat to a safe hide-out, the capsized hulk of the Tirpitz. Exploring below, they regain the spot where they had come down by rope—to find the rope gone.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"I haven't got one." How he wished he had. There was an angry sound in the darkness beside him and then a dull thud on the plating. The torch above snapped on to spotlight the Colt lying there: then it went out again

" Are you hurt, Marianne? " Heskin tried to whisper.

" No. But that this should happen—now." A laugh came through the darkness. Then the voice began more briskly: " Now, to business. I shall not put on the light, in case you, in fact, have another gun, but here is a present for you."

Something fell at their feet with a heavy thud. " It is my case—containing the money. And my proposition is the same. It is a little before our agreed time-limit, but I should like the answer now."

" *No!* " Marianne almost spat the word out.

" Then you need more time to reflect."

Heskin tried to keep his voice steady: " What do you mean? "

" I shall leave you here—and come back at intervals to ask whether you have changed your minds. It must be wet and cold down there and, I imagine, odorous. Soon your torch will run out—and then, only darkness."

There was a silence and then Heskin said, " But you can't do that! "

" I assure you no considerations of humanity would stop me. Oh, I see—you are thinking your absence will be noticed? "

Like a ghost voice, his words floated down to them. Now, the tone became almost apologetic. " I have dealt with that, I think. I took the liberty of going to the Captain after you left—and gave him your message. About your friend, so suddenly and so seriously ill in Trondheim. That you had rushed off to catch the plane and asked me to deal with your luggage. The staff were so sorry—but gratified by your generous tips. They will sail today without giving the incident another thought.

" Perhaps," the voice went on, " you have anticipated my other difficulty—your boat—so I shall tell you about that, too. When the tide has turned, we shall cut it adrift and it will go south down the Sound. When it is found, and you are missing, an accident will be assumed. Now, I think, you may reconsider . . ."

Neither answered.

" The sooner we start, the sooner we finish," murmured Graustein. " I shall come back in eight hours. I hope, of course, that ankle is not too painful, and I must tell you, in case you manage to find a way up, I am leaving a colleague at the opening—he has explicit orders."

They heard the hollow sounds of his retreat along the double bottom.

There was a long space of silence and darkness before Heskin dared to switch on the one torch. There lay the suitcase and the gun. Marianne was struggling with the lace of her shoe; above it he could see the blue puffiness of the ankle.

" Are we to rot here till that devil comes back—to take all we have? " Both looked towards the suitcase; somehow, it did not occur to either to doubt his word or to count the notes inside.

" No." He spoke softly, almost to himself. " There is just a

chance of another way out—if I'm lucky. I shall have to take the torch and go back. Do you mind being left in the dark? Will you trust me, for half an hour?"

"I'll have to." She looked very forlorn, propped there against the wall. He undid his money-belt, and laid it beside her. "Security," he said, then picked up the torch, and started to move back towards the stern.

He was making for that great, round cylinder that towered up like a gasometer to disappear through the next deck. They had passed it on their way in, and somewhere, at some level, there must be an opening into it.

Winding and unwinding the string as he made each attempt, trial and error were at last rewarded. Suddenly, he came upon a three-foot gap in the curved plating and when he shone his torch down through this opening, he saw a chance that his theory might be right.

It was like a huge, circular well, the inside walls descending smooth and unbroken to where the dark face of the water lay thirty feet below. He turned the light, searching for some foothold to get down by, but there was none. If his second assumption proved correct, he would have to jump. He switched out the light and waited till his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness. There was a faint greyness, a luminosity creeping through the water from one side far, far down.

He groped his way back to Marianne. "Listen, I've been through to the turret-bottom—that round thing we passed. I think there is a way out through it. I'll tell you how I know. Have you ever heard of Scapa Flow?"

She looked back at him, intent and wary.

"Well, it's years ago now, but when I was a small boy I used to spend my holidays at a place called Rosyth. That's where hulks of the scuttled German fleet from the First World War were towed in for breaking up. I remember one particularly . . . When she came in, there were only great holes in the deck where the turrets had been. They had been dragged out by their own weight when she capsized."

She was listening, her chin cupped in her hands. "So—?"

"The same thing has happened here. There is just a great hole with the sea at the bottom—the turret and all the hoisting gear from the magazine have gone."

"But how does that help us?"

"Wait a minute. Do you remember that, when we came round the stern, the deck rails on one side were just showing? The water can't be very deep there. If I can get down into it, I should be able to swim out under, climb on the keel—then back here to pull you out."

She thought for a moment. "What about the man he says he left to watch?"

"I don't think he is there. But if he is—and I get that far—I'll come from the last direction he would expect."

He kicked off his shoes. " You can make a demonstration with one of these every few minutes. Bang on the wall. The sound may carry enough to keep him occupied. It will give you something to do, too."

She was still staring at him. " How are you going to get down to the water? "

" Jump."

" And if you can't get through—how will you get back? "

He smiled. " I shan't. There's no way back. If I don't break my neck hitting something I can't see under the water, and if I can't find a way through, I shall swim round the bottom of that shaft like a puppy in a bucket till I drown. But I think the first is the real danger. I waited in the dark to test the other, and there is clear light coming through the water from one side."

A hand came up to catch his sleeve. " Stay here, Erik. It's not worth it. We'll have to deal with him."

" No, Marianne. We should be back where we were before. I'd rather finish everything than have that happen."

He tried to sound very businesslike. " You've got the money—take my coat, it will hinder me and may keep you warm. And my watch." He knelt down and strapped it on, draping the coat round her shoulders. " Now give me your torch."

" But it's broken," she said. " Hadn't you better take the gun? "

" It mightn't be much use after a swim—and I only want some sort of weapon. You take my torch instead of yours; there's quite a bit left in the battery, and it will keep you company if you're scared."

" How will you see? "

" I've got a string fixed to the spot where I have to take off for my jump. I can feel my way. It will be better not to see any farther than that."

He was very close to her, and he thought he had never seen her look so beautiful. " Listen," he said, " one last thing. If I'm not back in an hour, you'll know you're on your own. Bergman didn't tell me very much—but here it is, all of it. *Near Nordkapp there is a bay called Hornvika—which has a point called Hornsness. They are under that.*"

He looked at her once more; then, taking a firm grip on the end of the string, he bent forward, and snapped out the torch. " Save that for when you need it," he said.

The darkness was a comforting cloak for the other thing that had to be done. " I want you to know I love you," he said quietly. It was a clumsy, misplaced kiss, but as he slipped away on his stockinged feet, one hand groping ahead while the other ran along the string, a bright light was burning inside him.

The cheek that his lips had brushed so quickly was wet, and she had not moved away.

The journey in the dark was not as difficult as he had imagined: climbing, with the aid of matches struck at crucial turns, he arrived at last by the slit in the wall of the turret. He struck one more and

threw it into the well, watching the flame snuff out before it hit the water. Perhaps it was better not to see.

"'*Twere well it were done quickly*," he said, and his voice rolled back to him. Then, he dropped forward into space.

The water was very cold, stung his eyes, and tasted horrible. Treading water, he turned round to face the brightest point of that underwater light. With a last desperate gulp of air, he put his head down, eyes open, and started a slow, steady, breast stroke to gain maximum depth. Five . . . six . . . seven strokes, the water was changing from grey to green, and a dark shadow slid by just over his head—ten . . . eleven . . . twelve—now he was letting a little air go with each effort. Then, the deck rail—the trap he had feared most—was above and behind. He was shooting up through clear water to sunshine and air.

Slowly, without a ripple, he paddled to the shelter of the side, and then went back along it, hand over hand, until he could crawl onto the hull over the shelf of the stern. He paused in the shadow of the great rudder to get back his breath and untie the broken torch from his waist. Then, silently, he ran up the side of the keel, below the crest, towards the broad girth amidships. When he crawled up on hands and knees to the skyline, that side of the sea was as empty as the other. Gleb was there, sitting beside the entrance to the hull with his back towards Heskin. He was peering down into it; still and intent, like a cat at a mousehole. He did not even start to turn until Heskin was on him.

Perched on the edge of the steep slope, thrown off balance as he twisted to reach inside his coat, he hadn't a chance when Heskin jumped, torch slashing. Both his feet caught Gleb on the side of the chest just as the grip of the automatic appeared from under the coat. The gun flew outwards into the water, as Gleb arched over backwards in a long, slow turn. His thin screech died as he bounced off the side and fell head first onto the pontoon below.

Heskin landed on his side, sliding and scraping down the plates until one hand caught in a foothold. He hung, looking down at the square of the pontoon with that untidy grey bundle spread-eagled in the middle: wondered, without satisfaction, why their boat was still moored there: remembered that the tide would not have turned yet. Then came the painful climb down for a closer inspection. Gleb had got himself a broken neck.

It took a long time to drag Marianne up through the hole and then along the double bottom and down to the pontoon. It was not only that the ankle was painful and she could hardly walk: something was happening to him. The deadly ache in his legs, the headache; that hazy, unreal feeling, and the shivering were not the result of his swim. He knew what was coming—and in another hour he would be useless.

The sun was high now, flecking the water with diamonds of light, and the clouds, scattered like balls of cotton wool, gave promise of another fine day. All round them from Tromsø island north up the Sound, the wide sweep of water was empty.

At last, he had her safely on the pontoon. Every movement needed concentration now, and was a painful, laboured necessity. He tried to support her as they shuffled across to the launch. She stopped for a moment to stare down at the still, grey form.

"Gleb," she said slowly, "is he—?"

"Yes."

Then for the first time she noticed him. "You're shaking, Erik—you must be chilled through. And I've still got your coat. Please take it."

He lowered her into the boat and dropped Graustein's battered suitcase down beside her. "I'm all right. I must do something about that first." He nodded in the direction of the pontoon.

"Yes." She looked up towards the bows. "The anchor, that should be heavy enough. Take my knife and cut it away with the rope. Lash that tight round each ankle and tie both together. Button up his coat—and pull the belt tight. That will stop things floating away."

Her instructions were so detailed that he wondered how often she had helped to do something of this kind.

He tied the body up, dragged it to the edge, and slid the feet over the side. Then he let go his grip under the arms. For a moment the body stayed upright, chest-deep in the water, spinning slowly while the head hung to one side. Then it was gone in a widening band of ripples and great round bubbles.

He staggered back to her. "There's just this." He held out a hat. "We had better take it with us."

When he got into the boat and tried to crank the engine, it was too much for him. He let the handle fall and bowed his head on his knees. "Sorry—can't do it," he whispered.

"Erik, what's the matter? You're shaking worse than ever—you're sweating."

"How—far—where is the farm—we're going to?" He had to force the words through chattering teeth.

"Only the second bay to the south. There is a jetty and the farm is just over the hill. *Erik, what is the matter with you!*"

He was lying back now. "In an hour—I shall be a write-off," he said. "I'll try to make it there. Then, for two days—just roll me up in blankets—get quinine—if you can."

"What is it?"

"Malaria—I get these bouts. It started on the Gold Coast in the war."

"Malaria—?" Her eyes opened wide.

The deck was heaving round him in dim waves as he lay watching her crawl up to cast off, and then struggle to start the engine. With the throb of it beneath him, he closed his eyes.

It was all confused after that. Patches of memory remained between the seas of darkness. The awful climb out of the boat, the push that sent the launch drifting away on the tide. Then strange faces peering, the feel of blankets, of being carried. After that, fear: of her leaving him . . . of the police . . . of Graustein.

He came to in the dim light of a small, bare room with drawn curtains. He was on a narrow bed, piled high with blankets, so weak that he could hardly raise his head. Beside him, sitting on a stool, was Marianne, watching him. She looked very tired.

He said, " I thought you would have gone."

" No. I wanted to. Only—" She moved uneasily.

" Only what—? "

" You've been here three days," she said, " in the farmhouse. I was so scared. I didn't dare get a doctor. You've been talking—raving—I had to tie you down."

She got up and walked over to the window. " You talked about everything—over and over again. But there was not a word more than you have said before—except things about me that made me ashamed. If there had been one flaw, one lie, I should have gone. There wasn't."

" Then you believe I am not Bergman? "

She did not turn round. " I don't know. I want to."

There was a silence while she pulled back a corner of the curtain and peered out. " I'm sorry about this darkness," she said, " but I didn't want anyone to see you too clearly."

" I don't mind—the light would only hurt my eyes."

" How do you feel? " she said.

" All right now—but terribly weak—it's just a matter of a few more days."

She had another look through the curtain. " There may be no time—there's a sea mist coming in. It may be our only chance." She turned. " Look—I'm sorry, but I must talk now. These people here, they think they know who you are—and they do not like it. Bergman was hated. So far, I have been able to bribe them, but now other things have happened, and they will not let us stay. Graustein has been here."

He tried to sit up. " Here—to the farm? "

" No. But to the island—inquiring about a missing friend. And after him came the police, because, I think, Graustein had been talking to them of us—and his friend. I saw them, said that all the time we were on the *Tirpitz* we did not see a soul. But they do not seem quite satisfied. They want a statement from you when you are well."

He tried to speak, but she held up her hand. " Let me finish. Now these people here are really scared. And I have played on their fear and their greed—I have hired their fishing-boat, the *Fredheim*, with one of the sons to pilot it, to take us from here to Nordkapp. We must go soon. This mist will give the only cover when there is no night. But you cannot move."

He said, " I shall be fine in two days. But now—I couldn't walk a step to that boat."

She gave him one of those bitter smiles. " I'm sure the farmer would be delighted to carry you off his land."

After a bowl of broth, he felt better, and then Marianne helped him dress and held him while he tried a few futile steps across the

room. Then the farmer and his sons came, standing in the doorway staring, their eyes full of an old, sour hate.

When they had gone, she knelt and pulled Graustein's suitcase from beneath the bed. " It's all there—intact—I just counted to make sure. And your money-belt, but I had to use some of that. I think I had better keep the gun."

As he strapped on the belt, Heskin said, " At Nordkapp, what happens? What does the farmer think we are doing? "

" Something slimy in the black market, I imagine. Let them think what they like. But they have agreed to take us to Kjelvik, the nearest port. After that, we must try to get another boat."

" If we can't? "

She looked towards the rucksack standing in the corner. " I have collected a few things in that. One that will make Olaf—the son that is taking us—go wherever we want."

The mist thickened and turned to a drizzle. When they were ready, the farmer and his son came in again, not speaking, eyes looking straight through him. The younger man hoisted him up on his back, and they passed in procession out of the house. At the door stood the womenfolk, silent, hostile, staring.

They moved in line across the potato patch, the farmer leading; then Marianne, foot bandaged, still limping slightly, carrying rucksack and suitcase; last, the son with his burden.

They went in single file over the crest of the hill, and down the long slope to the jetty. The rain was driving now, thick sweeping clouds of it, cutting visibility to a few yards. Heskin heard the chug of the idling diesel engine long before the shape of the boat loomed up. Then she was beside them, fended off from the end of the jetty by a tall, fair boy.

There was thirty foot of her, with sloping counter, two masts, and the sentry-box wheelhouse and outsize yellow funnel to the stern.

The column halted and Heskin was lowered to the deck. Marianne stood above him, facing the farmer, as she felt in her pocket and then pulled out a bundle of notes.

She looked down. " The arrangement is an equal sum when we are delivered to Kjelvik, Erik. I think this gentleman would like that confirmed. From what he knows, he cannot believe that you do not speak Norwegian. He knows a little English—so please tell him."

He looked up at the flint eyes and the bald crown glistening in the rain.

" Olaf—" Heskin pointed, " more—" he pointed again at the money, " at Kjelvik."

The farmer's eyes snapped and his fist closed over the money. Then he nodded to his son. When Marianne had jumped down, the boy pushed off and ran back to the wheelhouse.

As the note of the engine increased and the bows swung out, Heskin watched the two men walk away up the jetty, without even a backward glance.

He turned his head aft, staring at the curving circle of their wake. "We're going south," he said.

"Yes. To the next westward channel, and then north in the open sea. It's safer there." She looked down at him. "I must get you below out of this, or you'll have another attack."

"Yes." He was watching the way she was twisting the wedding-ring round and round on her finger. Suddenly he wondered who it had belonged to before—her mother, perhaps. For it was not new: several times he had noticed that it was worn quite smooth.

There was a cabin of sorts on the *Fredheim*, and Marianne lowered him down the steep ladder into it. Cramped and dark, with two narrow bunks running down each side of the table, and a lamp in gimbals bolted forward between the lockers, the cabin smelt of paraffin, rats, and cheese.

"Take the gun," she said. "I must go up on deck for a minute."

He was very tired: cold and wet and not feeling too good. He took off his coat and rolled up in the blankets that were piled on the bunk. It was warmer then, but hard, and the bulk of the automatic felt uncomfortable in his hip pocket. He took it out and pushed it far back under the mattress. Then he relaxed, waiting for her to come.

It was getting darker—the rain clouds, he supposed. The lamp should be lit, but he was too tired to move. The steady pound of the diesel vibrated through every part of the hull, making the woodwork of the cabin whisper in protest, and the crockery and water-jugs, stowed in the racks above the bunks, jump and rattle as if they were alive.

When Marianne came, she was carrying a steaming coffee-pot. She put it on the table and went over to light the bulkhead lamp; as the yellow flame grew, her hair shone, spangled with pearls of raindrops.

"Tired?"

"No, not really—more cold than anything."

"I've brought you some coffee."

She reached up to take two mugs from their hooks, and then he was propped up, sipping the dark, bitter brew.

"I've had a long talk to young Olaf," she said. "Really, I'm rather sorry for him. He's scared of us—and what we might involve him in—but he's much more scared of his father. But I think we understand each other now."

"How long will it take us to reach Kjelvik?"

"Two days and a night."

"What do we do—take over when he wants to sleep?"

"No. He says he will run into shelter and anchor for his rest. It doesn't really matter—only makes it a bit longer. But I think we'll have to keep an eye on him. Take alternate watches later on."

She put down her mug. "Now I am going to show you my part in this business—the details that were on the map." She

hesitated. " You see, in the beginning, when you told me that you carried your part in your head—I did the same. I memorized the map and burnt it."

" Not now," he said.

An expression flickered across her face like a ripple on water. It was there and gone so fast that he could not be sure of its meaning. It might have been tenderness.

" You're tired."

" I told you—only cold."

She went up the ladder to the deck for a moment and when she came back she closed the hatch after her. The light of the bulkhead lamp shrank to a thin blue line as she turned it down.

" We're through the channel and turning north," she said. " We'll leave him alone for a few hours, I don't think there will be any trouble." She came towards him through the gloom and touched one of his hands lying on top of the blanket. " But you're frozen. Wait a minute."

He watched while she spread more blankets over him and then sat down on the edge of the bunk. " Move over," she whispered.

She moved in close beside him and he could feel the warmth flowing between them. " Give me your hands," she said.

Her skin was very soft and smooth where she pushed them under her shirt against her breast; the rattle and thump of the engines faded to a lullaby. As he drifted off on a dark tide that heaved in rhythm with the rise and fall of their ship on the open sea, he knew there was nothing more to want.

He woke to bright light and silence. His watch had stopped and the blankets had been tucked round on the empty space beside him. He found his shoes and coat. Shaky but rested, he climbed up the ladder to the deck.

The ship was anchored in a little rocky bay, riding easily on the grey seas that were dashing against the cliff. Marianne was sitting on the deck, drawing something on a sheet of paper. There was no sign of Olaf. She smiled at him. " Better? "

" Yes, much. How long have you been up here? "

" Oh, quite a time. I heard the engines cut and came up to see why. It was just that Olaf had decided to sleep."

" Where is he? "

" In the fish-hold. We're all right here: there can't be a house within miles."

He looked round from the steep grey cliff, green-mottled with patches of coarse grass, to the other side where there was nothing but the pearl-grey rim of the horizon. The sky was clear but overcast, everything a monotone of sadness.

He stood looking down at her. " Last night—down there. Did it mean that, at last, you really believe me? "

He could not see her shadowed face when she answered and her voice was very low. " I don't know, Erik. But I want to—I want to."

Their bread was black, the herring salt and hard, the coffee very bitter; but it was food and it put new life into him. When they had finished eating, she stretched out on deck, spreading the paper in front of her. "Come and look. I've drawn it so many times that I know I've got it just as it was."

It was no more than a diagram drawn in two halves. The first was a waving, humped line that might have been the silhouette of a mountain, blank but for a little black dot nearly at the crest and a cross halfway down the right-hand edge just above a sharp, almost semicircular indent. There were two sets of figures, one against the dot, one against the cross; they read 309 and 348 respectively. That was all.

The second section looked like a figure of eight standing on end with a thin pipe leading from the top that spread out into a kind of funnel. The narrow part of the pipe was filled with a plug made of small, round circles; across the bottom of the figure of eight was a straight line like a level of liquid; here was another cross and two words in Norsk.

"Even now that you have told me where, I can't make a thing out of it. Oh, if only Lars had put one clue—" She stopped suddenly. He hardly heard; he was poring over the paper.

"I think we are a bit farther on. I've seen the chart of the North Cape—of Nordkapp, and I'm sure this one—" he pointed to the left side of the diagram—"is a plan of it. That dot must be the tea-house on top of the cliff; this curve at the side, Hornvika, the bay of the horn."

"And the cross?"

"Probably the Horn itself—I don't know."

"Then those figures?"

"They must be bearings," he said slowly. "It's the only thing possible. You must come in from the south-east, make the tea-house bear 309°. And when the other thing—whatever it is—bears 348°, you're there."

He looked at her curiously. "But I don't understand . . . If I had been Bergman—and if what you've told me is true—why should I bother to contact you at all? Bergman was the third man,

wasn't he? He went with the others to hide the stuff. He could surely have gone back now and collected alone."

She turned sideways, propping herself on one elbow, giving him a long, searching look. It was as if she was peeling off layer after layer of pretence from the kernel of his secret thoughts.

"As I am trying so hard to believe you, I'll tell you why. I was told that Bergman never got there."

"But you said—"

"That he was the third man. *He was.* But they said that he did not go all the way. The Commandant trusted no one. Bergman went on the voyage as a kind of escort. He was put ashore at a little village west of Nordkapp and the other two went on alone. Bergman had a very good idea where they went, but he didn't know exactly. So he had to have me, as I had the details, but didn't know the location."

"But why did you have them? You were not in the camp. And there's another thing, if you knew Bergman, which you must have done to recognize me, how was it that you did not spot the small differences? We were not exactly alike."

"*I had never met Bergman.*"

"But you picked me out at once in the hotel foyer in Bergen."

"I had seen a photograph. Other things besides the map were smuggled out of that concentration camp. A snapshot for the Resistance—for future reference."

"But why were these things passed to you?" To Heskin, it did not seem to add up.

She went on quickly: "First Bergman advertised in our papers—oh, so very discreetly. Then he started writing to me from Spain. He wanted to help me, he was the dear friend of an old comrade. He didn't know that I *knew* . . ."

"Why pick on you, Marianne?"

"Because he knew that anything belonging to—the hostages—would in time come back to me." A dark shadow crossed her face.

Then she sat back on her heels, tearing the paper into shreds, which she tossed over the side.

"What do you think of the other drawing?"

He shook his head. "It might be anything. A container, perhaps—the stuff might be buried under the sea. What do those two words at the bottom mean?" Even now he dared not reveal to her his childhood knowledge of Norwegian.

"White sand," she said.

There was silence; the ship heaved gently on the swell. "Somehow, I had thought it would be buried on the land and I had everything that would be necessary. But we have lost so much . . . all the gear I had on the *Mercur* . . ."

"Bergman said it was hidden. I'm sure he used that word. *Hidden. Something if sold to the right people . . . rich for life.*"

"We must wait and see; plan with what we have when we know more. Push on fast—and take turns at watching young Olaf."

"Do you think—?"

"No, he's far too scared of us to think up much on his own. But he might try to turn home or run for a port inside the Sound."

She stood up. "He's had a good rest now—and I must get some. I'll wake him. Do you feel fit enough to take a watch? By the way, where's the gun?"

"Stuffed under the mattress in the cabin."

"Good. We don't want him to see it—unless he has to. Just watch the sun and make sure Olaf keeps on to the north and away from land. If there's anything you don't like, call me."

He watched her go up the deck and thump on the forward hatch. Soon Olaf's tousled head appeared and he came towards them, yawning and rubbing his eyes. He disappeared down the ladder that led to the engine-room, and after a few preliminary coughs, the diesel started with an uneven beat. When the anchor was up, Marianne gave a smile and went below. As the *Fredheim* turned on her northward course, Heskin was left to his vigil.

It was an odd, lonely day.

Ahead and to port, was the sweeping rim of the Arctic Ocean, without a ship to break the sheen of its gentle swell. To starboard, only the islands: great lumps breaking from the sea like broken teeth; wild and desolate, almost uninhabited, a tumble of black scree and bracken.

North Kvaløy . . . Vannøy . . . Fugløy . . . Sørøy. He marked each soft, sad-sounding Norse name on the chart as they passed, each towering a little steeper, a little higher towards the last great cliff of Nordkapp.

Watching there for some hours, Heskin did a lot of thinking. His memory groped back to the very beginning, then steadily along the line of incidents that had led up to the present; last and most tenderly, he thought of what it must be like at this moment in the dark cabin below. He came back with a jerk as the hatch thudded open and Marianne's head appeared. "Why didn't you wake me? I've had a long sleep. Where are we?"

He consulted his map. "Off the north tip of Sørøy, I think."

"Well, come down and rest—you must get all the sleep you can now. Everything all right on deck?"

"Not a thing to worry about—Olaf has been admirable."

"I've been thinking—perhaps it would be as well to go round the outside of the Cape and see where those bearings lead us."

"What about Olaf? Will he play?"

She laughed. "He'll have to."

When Heskin was in the cabin, Marianne went to the rucksack and fumbled inside: she came back holding a crumpled grey felt hat. "Do you remember this?"

"Gleb's," he said, "it fell off when he hit the pontoon."

"Yes. You remember we took it in the boat. What you don't know is—that after you were taken to the farmhouse, I was scared our boat would drift ashore too soon and pinpoint where we were, so I bribed the farmer to tow it farther down the Sound. He came back with the hat we had forgotten. It was obviously too small for

you. Then Graustein and the police began to make inquiries and the farmer started to think."

"But I don't see—"

"That it is a threat to them? No. But—" she turned the hat over in her hands—"if I tell Olaf his father was right—and that the hat is hidden in this ship—and that if he isn't a good boy, we will tell the police that they killed Gleb—what then?"

"You think blackmail better than a gun?"

"Certainly. To start with. Now, where can we hide it?"

They both looked round the cabin slowly. Then she pointed. "There—under the ladder to the deck—isn't it a cupboard?"

He bent under the ladder and got his fingers into the keyhole of a door that was about three feet high and flush with the after bulkhead. It was not locked and swung open easily. But it was not a cupboard. As the gap widened, the noise of the engine doubled in volume and Heskin found he was looking down a short, narrow corridor. At the far end, the rim of the engine's fly-wheel shone in the light of the engine-room hatch as it spun.

"Nowhere there," he said, closing it, "just a passage into the engine-room. They must use it in bad weather, I suppose."

Marianne ran up the ladder until her head and shoulders were above the hatch coaming. "He's still on his course," she said as she came down, "but I'd better not stay below too long. Put it under the mattress with the gun. I'll go up. You get some rest."

She was just above him on the ladder, bending down towards him. "Sleep well, Erik." She leaned over a little farther and quickly touched his lips with hers.

After she had gone, he moved about the cabin for a while, tidying up before he took off his outer clothes. He stood for a moment by the tumble of blankets on the bunk, picturing what it had been like—what he had been imagining during his long watch on deck. She would have been sleeping then, lying on her side with one arm relaxed outside the blankets, palm uppermost, fingers curled. A strand of honey hair would have been falling across her cheek . . . the pale eyelids flat and the dark lashes spread out. He had seen her asleep so often. But it was different thinking about it now . . . now there was a chance.

It was a deep, relaxed sleep that came to him when he had rolled up in the blankets, a long sleep, and when he came back from it, there had been no summons from the deck. The regular thump of the diesel went on unaltered, but there seemed to be less light than before. He scrambled into his clothes and went up on deck.

Marianne turned from looking to the east. She was standing against the side of the wheelhouse.

"I was just coming to call you. There's Nordkapp."

The overcast sky had cleared to banks of piled-up clouds in the west, and the great ball of the midnight sun was throwing a screen of chequered orange light from behind them. The sea had that angry, jagged look although there was no change in the texture of the swells. But it was the cliff that took his breath away.

The black wall that hemmed the whole of their starboard quarter was sheer, unbroken granite, without a break in colour to suggest grass slope or ledge. The only mark was the thin white line of surf that ran along its foot. The skyline rose up, sheer, towards the last massive block of land, which seemed to end in a giant vertical cut a thousand feet deep. Ultima Thule—the last fist of land, thrust out in challenge across the cold Arctic sea towards the Pole.

" Can you see the tea-house? There—at the very tip."

He looked for a moment at the black dot that broke the smooth edge where the land ended—then back to her head beside him, her hair glowing in the tawny light. " What now? " he said.

" I've been thinking. It might be as well to test your theory about those bearings now. We shan't be able to get a boat like this in Kjelvik, with a proper compass. It would be more certain."

" But what about Olaf? He'll know."

" Not if we keep to English and don't go too far up. If you are right, then we can come back before anything is obvious."

" But if he won't do it? "

" He will. There's nothing particularly incriminating in steering a set course for a few minutes. I'll tell him now."

He watched her go to the door of the wheelhouse and lean against it, shouting. He could not hear what she said above the engine's beat; he could only see her gestures, and Olaf's head shaking in a dissent that grew less and less emphatic until at last the bows of the *Fredheim* swung a few points to the south.

Marianne came back to him. " He doesn't like it. But he's going to change course."

They were close to the great cliff now, skirting the black buttresses with their white fringe of deep-surging surf. The noise of the engine was tossed up to die in a screaming cloud of birds. The sea was empty but for one fishing-boat, steaming parallel to them some way off, that showed as a dark line against a bank of smoky cloud. As he watched, a pinpoint of light blinked on and off from it in broken rhythm.

He touched her arm. " Look, they're signalling to us."

" Why should they? And if they are, we're not answering."

Now the tapering spire of the Horn showed dark against the sky, as it jutted out from the face of the North Cape. Then, on the skyline far above them, the dot of the tea-house showed again.

" Look! " Marianne gripped his arm. " Hornvika—"

He made out the funnelled circle of the bay, the red and black scar of the rusty, burnt-out jetty, and a great spur of rock jutting out beyond.

" That must be Hornsness," he whispered. " It *is* there."

As they stood off Nordkapp, ready to circle and come in on their course, he saw the same pale, flickering rhythm of light break out from the dot of the tea-house.

" Those signals," he said, " they are going from the tea-house—look, there—to that boat." He turned to look astern. The fishing-boat was a little nearer, moving diagonally towards them.

"Then they can have nothing to do with us. But that boat is getting a little close. We must make our run at once."

They moved up to the wheelhouse and she shouted something at Olaf. The beat of the engine increased. Heskin stood at the side window of the wheelhouse, watching the swing of the compass card. Now it was bearing 309° on the tea-house. The cross-bearing on the Horn was nowhere near.

Marianne was beside him. "Do you know the first thing that made me begin to believe you?" she said suddenly.

"I don't care—as long as you do."

"It was when we left the farm. Do you remember the way they looked at us?"

"I didn't like it. The men, and the women. It was without expression—as if we were not there."

"The 'frozen face,' Erik; if you had seen it before, you would have shown that you had. The Germans—and the Quislings—knew it so well. If we had to speak to them, we gave them the shortest answer. But we never saw them—they just weren't there for us. Yesterday, you merely looked puzzled."

There was so much to say, but it would have to wait. He was staring through the wheelhouse window, watching the compass card and the swing of the Horn to the right.

"315° . . . 320° . . . 325° . . ." he called slowly; then for a moment he lifted his eyes to gauge the distance. "But this can't be right, Marianne. By the time the Horn bears 348°, we would be through the cliff—"

It was Olaf and the wheelhouse that saved them; perhaps too, an ingrained instinct from the war that made him pull Marianne down to the deck, as he tried to shield her. There were giant whips cracking all around them: only bullets coming straight at you make that sound.

Time stood still in the moment's silence before the next burst; then came the smack of lead on wood, and the shatter of glass as one of the windows of the wheelhouse fell out on them. Still unbelieving, Heskin crawled aft till he could peer over the engine-room coaming.

The black fishing-boat—or was she that, with the high-countered hull and the speed of creaming bow wave?—had come up on their quarter while they had all been facing forward, intent on their course. Now she was closing in fast.

"Keep down!" he shouted. A third burst whipped overhead, and from behind him, there was a slithering sound and the deck canted as the *Fredheim* started a tight turn to starboard. He rolled over and saw Olaf, head bowed on arms, his bulk sagging on the wheel, which had spun to the left and jammed.

Then a harsh voice, loud and unmistakable, carried across the water. "We are faster and can turn as quickly. Stand up and throw down your guns. If you don't, we shall run you down. You will gain nothing except a wetting."

Now Marianne was on her knees. "He's right, Erik—as usual."

She stood up and walked round the wheelhouse, hands above her head. They did not watch the black hull loom up on them, as they lowered the dead Olaf from the wheel, centred it, and cut their engine. There was only the heavy hiss of the bow wave and the deep throb of powerful engines. At the scrape of the two counters, the foredeck of the *Fredheim* seemed to swarm with squat grey figures, with Graustein towering among them.

Searched, their hands tied behind them, they were hustled down to the cabin and pushed onto opposite bunks, with legs straddled and each ankle tied to ring-bolts on the floor. They watched the cabin being searched; then they were left in the charge of Pavel, Gleb's companion from the *Mercur*. Not a word had been spoken; Graustein had not appeared.

Pavel sat straddled across one corner of the table between them, one hand coiled loosely round a big Luger. Marianne looked very small, somehow crumpled, as she sat opposite Heskin. The silence was broken by the tramp of feet overhead and then a splash as something heavy went over the side.

" This is the one that doesn't speak English," she said suddenly.

Pavel's eyes slid over to her and he removed the matchstick from his mouth. " *Net*," he said.

Marianne went on: " Did you see the uniform? They are funny people—they took off all their badges, but forgot to remove the stitch-marks. The pattern of the star was quite clear on the cap of the one—"

Pavel leaned over quite slowly and put down his gun; then he hit her hard across the mouth with the back of his hand. Heskin heard the hollow sound as her head bounced back on the panelling, watched a slow trickle of blood run from the corner of her mouth. Pavel swung upright and went on with his excavation.

Then Marianne started to sing—a Norwegian folk-song he had often heard her hum, but now she was singing English words to it.

" *The gun is underneath you, Erik . . . the gun is underneath . . .*"

Pavel bent over and half raised his hand. She stopped abruptly.

Staring straight at her, Heskin leaned back against the side, as if to get more comfortable. He had forgotten all about it . . . But it was still in place, he could feel the hard lump beneath him . . . they had not thought of searching there.

Then the hatch opened, and slowly, carefully, Graustein's bulk lowered itself into the cabin. At a curt command, Pavel went up the ladder and closed the hatch behind him.

Graustein stood looking at them. " I'm very angry with you," he said. " First, I make you a fair offer and you spurn it. Then you force me to use violence, which I detest. Last of all, you make the search to find you so difficult that I have to call in outside assistance—which means that other eyes are watching and my ultimate reward will not be so great."

He stood brooding for a moment, while he rocked on his heels. " There is no time left now; *where are the papers*? "

There was a long silence.

The grey man shrugged his shoulders and looked at his wrist-watch. " I give you exactly five minutes alone to make up your minds. After that, I shall be forced to use methods that I dislike."

He paused, with one foot on the ladder. " I see you still have the money." He was looking at the brown case which Pavel had thrown on the bunk beside Marianne. " You will find it rather difficult to use, I fear. You didn't tie up friend Gleb too well, Herr Bergman, and he came to the surface after two days. The police are waiting for you at Kjelvik to ask you about that.

" So you have all the information. We are now no more than a party of four: you two, Pavel, and myself. My friends have an aversion to lingering in other people's territorial waters. They will wait outside the limit until we have finished our business—amicably, I hope."

He mounted the ladder and the deck hatch closed.

Heskin said softly: " I understood your song. The only hope is to leave me alone in here . . . Back me up in anything I start . . ."

The minutes dragged by, while the diesel continued its steady throb. Then a shaft of light came from above, and Graustein lowered himself into the cabin again.

" Well? "

There was no answer. He gave a deep sigh and moved past them to the bulkhead lockers, taking the jug of water from the rack; he put it down on the table and pulled a length of thin cord from his hip pocket.

As he crouched on the tabletop, tying knots at each inch of the rope's length, he continued: " Why do you make me do these things? If you will only tell me what I want to know, we can avoid all this."

No one answered.

" I am a great reader of thrillers," the soft, disinterested voice went on, " but I can never understand why the authors go to such lengths when the villain has to extract information. All this modern science, these truth drugs, the unknown injections used for torture—they are not necessary."

He held up the rope. " They had the answer with this—and some water—three hundred years ago."

He came over to Heskin and measured the cord tight round his head. He tied a loop just short of the required length, which he suddenly jammed down across Heskin's forehead and above his ears, the knots biting in, hard and uncomfortable.

" Wet rope shrinks, Herr Bergman—as you will know if you have done any camping. That cord is going to be painful . . . When I wet it—" he picked up the water jug and poured the contents slowly round the top of Heskin's head—" it will start to shrink, gradually but with terrible force. I'm told it is like the most acute neuralgia . . . but it gets increasingly worse . . . until something breaks . . ."

Heskin shook the water out of his eyes and looked straight at Marianne. " No," she said. And it was an order.

The pain had not started yet; there was a sudden foretaste in the dull shooting that ran down the back of his neck and the stabbing behind the eyes.

Graustein looked across at Marianne. " And while we are waiting, I think I shall try some applied psychology on you."

He went over and stood directly in front of her; with a quick movement, one hand gripped her hair while the other ripped her shirt backwards and downwards over her bound arms as the buttons split off one by one. She was wearing nothing under it.

" I have noticed your aversion," he said. " Now we shall see how much you really like my hands."

He looked at them for a moment then turned one over and started to rub the black back up and down on the point of her breast. The sound of her scream as she arched away from him was horrible.

" *No!* " said Heskin; this time it was not an order, but surrender. " Steer 309° on the Hornsness . . . she knows the rest . . . she will give it to you. But stop that."

" Good." He came round the table, reaching forward to rip the knotted cord off Heskin's head. " I sincerely hope she will, Herr Bergman, for I don't want to have to go through this again."

Marianne was lying back, sobbing in deep, shuddering gulps, her flesh showing very white against the blankets.

Graustein looked down at her, and when he spoke, his voice had changed completely. " Let me untie your hands and feet. Then you can get some more clothing."

He bent down behind her, only to jerk away with a hiss of pain as she buried her teeth in the upper part of his arm. Then he stood back, rubbing the place, a faint smile on his square face. " Understandable. But I do not think I care to risk it again."

He opened a clasp-knife and came towards Heskin with the gun ready in the other hand. " Lean forward," he said, " and don't try anything—because I shall shoot to hurt."

When he was free, Heskin untied Marianne, found another shirt, and helped her put it on. As he bent over to free her wrists, he was able to breathe, " Not now," close to her ear.

Graustein said, " I shall have to separate you. As you say the lady knows everything and she will be less trouble—she will come on deck. I shall not tie you again, Bergman. But if you attempt to leave this cabin—or your wife is unco-operative—she will take the consequences."

He pushed Marianne up the ladder in front of him and the hatch banged shut.

Heskin pulled up the mattress and grabbed the gun. He cocked it and put it in his hip pocket, then stood at the foot of the ladder, thinking desperately.

There was no time . . . The beat of the engine had not altered

while they were in the cabin. They might have been circling, and might already be back on their former course. He wondered if Marianne would try bluff and give wrong bearings—prayed that she would not, as he thought of what would happen to her.

There were only two ways out of that cabin: up the ladder—hopeless, because Graustein and his henchman would be watching and the hatch opened outwards; or through the passage to the engine-room, where the exit came up directly behind the wheel-house. Even that way would give no surprise. But if he could lure them down, one by one . . .

He kicked off his shoes, ran softly up the ladder, and eased home the bolt on the inside of the hatch. Then down and through the door of the engine-room passage.

The noise beat on him. He crawled round the great shining rim of the fly-wheel, on down to the sheltered side of the engine. There was little room or light in the space between the bulk of the cylinders and the side of the hull. A chain ran along over pulleys. As he watched, it jerked and moved a fraction. The steering-gear! Jam it somehow . . . No . . . they would know he was doing it.

He turned back to the engine, cursing that he knew so little about diesels.

Three pipes branched from a round thing on the crankcase to each of the cylinders, and ended in a square box. They must be the injectors . . and the bottom one the pump. Then this other pipe leading from it to the stern should connect with the fuel-tank. He followed it past the tail-shaft, pausing irresolute as he saw something else. In a gap in the floor plates, washed by the slop of bilge, was a round wheel. A sea-cock . . . Open that? But they had the dinghy and he would drown; it was the fuel-tank or nothing.

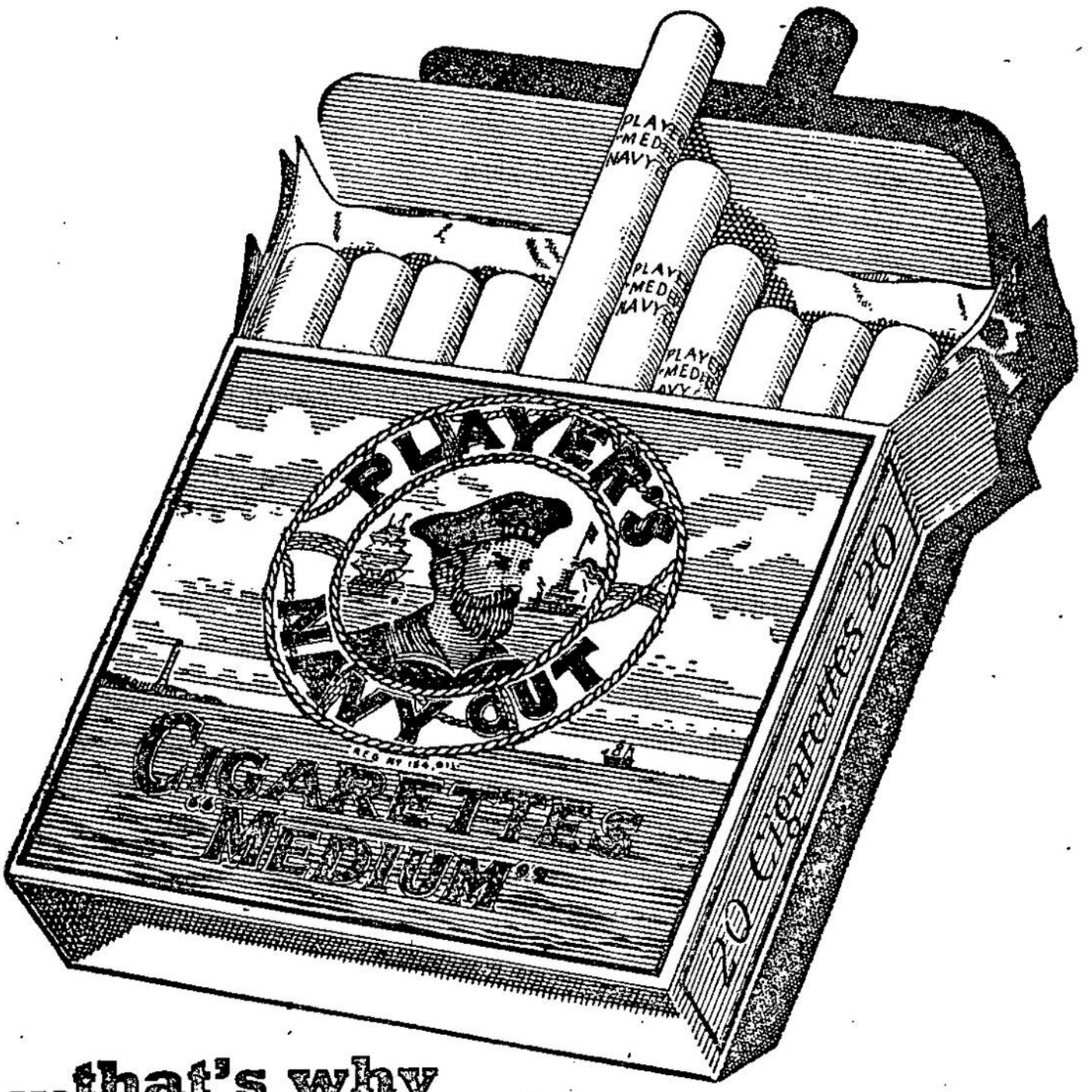
Now he was in front of it, a fat barrel fixed across the stern. There was a tap where the pipe led in, but he could not touch that. Taps do not turn off of their own accord; the engine would stop; and if his plan succeeded, he would have no idea how to start it again. All that was wanted was to make it run badly. Remembering car breakdowns in the past, he scraped some grease off the tail-shaft and pressed it into the air vent of the filler cap. No pump could pull against that.

It worked almost at once. One cylinder missed a beat, picked up again, and then the engine went on with the dot-and-carry rhythm of a peg-legged man. He picked up a monkey-wrench and crouched back in the shadow of the engine, waiting.

A thin shaft of light showed down the engine-room ladder as the hatch from the wheelhouse was opened. Then feet and legs, coming down backwards. It was Pavel. As he took a firmer grip on the wrench, Heskin smiled grimly.

They circled, Heskin concealed by the engine, as the man moved down on the pump side. Soon they were opposite and, inch by inch, Heskin raised himself until he could see over the cylinder block. Pavel's head was bent in concentration.

It's the tobacco that counts



...that's why

Player's please

{NCC 885}

Heskin brought the spanner down with all the strength in his body.

Pavel disappeared soundlessly, and the feel of the blow told Heskin that there was no need for another. He crawled back to the stern and resumed his watch.

It was a longer, more anxious wait this time, for twice he thought the engine would die altogether. He watched the slowing spin of the tail-shaft, wondered if the vibration would shake the cylinders from their mountings. Then, a shadow fell across the opening, the hatch went dark, and suddenly the thin beam of a torch stabbed out over the top of the engine. As he pressed flat, he heard that harsh voice calling down, " Pavel . . . Pavel . . ."

But Pavel, lying there on the far side, would never answer.

After a pause, the grey shoes started to grope their way down the ladder. This time, Heskin would have no advantage, because of the torch. Wondering if Marianne was still free to help him, he dropped the spanner and scrambled forward, pulling out the Colt. Before the great shoulders were through the hatch and while Graustein could neither bend nor turn, he shot him twice.

For a moment the grey man hung there, on the strength of his arms alone, then slid down with a crash to the plating. Heskin fumbled to scrape the grease off the filler cap and clear the blocked vent. As he crept back up the far side of the engine and waited for the diesel to pick up its normal beat, he heard it. As he crawled over soft, yielding Pavel, lying face down in the bilge, it came to him, even through the clatter of the engine.

A horrible sound that came in waves of intensity between gaps of silence. It was as if a huge fish was bumping and threshing against the plate of the engine-room. Once he thought he heard a call for help . . . " Pavel, *spasite* . . . Pavel, *spasite*! "

There was no sign of anything framed against the light square of the engine-room hatch, and he must find out what had happened to Marianne. He crouched there, straining to catch, through the other noises, any sound of movement.

After a time, he was sure there was none; even so, he would not risk the journey up that ladder. It would have to be down the tunnel and up through the cabin.

As he crawled by the fly-wheel, he saw, for a moment, the still grey shoulder sagging against the far side of the hull. Then he was unbolting the hatch and scrambling onto the deck.

They were steaming in a wide circle, the wheel unmanned. He saw why there had been no help from Marianne: she was lying on the foredeck, hands lashed behind her and secured to a ring-bolt. As he knelt to unloose them, he was panting. " Did he—? "

" No." She sat up and started to rub her wrists. " What has happened? "

He told her quickly. " Pavel won't worry us any more," he said, " and Graustein's not able to move—but he's got a gun."

Back in the wheelhouse, he steadied the *Fredheim* on a straight course. " Have you any idea where we are? "

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" Will you put her on the course? I'll have to see to him. If he's alive, he might try to set fire to the ship or sink her—anything."

He went to the lip of the hatch and peered down. The light slanted past him onto the ladder to throw a patch of brightness against the engine-room floor. Nearest Heskin, lay the Luger, square and black: at the far side, jutting through the shadow, he saw Graustein's grey cuff and his hand, palm upwards, still, the fingers curled.

" Graustein! " he called. There was no answer. He turned to Marianne. " I can see his gun. I shall have to go down and get it to make sure."

Feeling that his own gun was safe in his hip pocket, Heskin put his legs over the edge and turned to make a cautious landsman's descent, facing the ladder.

It was just when his head was level with the lip of the hatch and he was preparing to turn outwards for a last look before he reached the floor, that it happened. Without warning, both ankles were gripped from behind. Like iron bands, the clamps tightened, while a weight pressed against his legs, preventing kicking. Then the hands started to pull him down.

He screamed. His fingers slipped from one rung and just managed to catch the next. He could feel them being torn from their hold, the ache in his arms becoming almost unbearable as the pull increased. Then Marianne was above, lying flat on the deck as she tried to grab his shoulders. Her face was very close to him.

" No good," he hissed. " —Too strong. Get my gun—in—pocket—"

There was fear in her eyes and she did not seem to hear. In his desperation, he did not realize what he shouted to try and make her understand: " *Skynn deg . . . Revolveren er i baklommen . . .*"

From below him a horrible, sobbing noise came out of the darkness. Then she was reaching over, gripping his shoulder, and he felt the weight go from his pocket. The four shots sounded no louder than a hammer on wood; at the first three, the clamps jerked tighter, but with the last they slipped away quietly.

He hardly remembered how he managed to get back on deck and bolt the hatch. Then he was leaning against the wheelhouse door, trying to stop the shaking. Marianne had gone back to the wheel. The chug of the diesel went on steadily. They were very near the black cliff of Nordkapp now.

" Thank you," he said. " I—"

She did not turn round and her voice came back to him, cold, indifferent: " You had better take that cross-bearing soon."

He went round to the other side of the wheelhouse. He lined up on the point of the Horn and started calling softly, " 335° . . . 337° . . . 340°." His eyes strayed for a moment from their mark, first to Marianne's profile, so close, so expressionless, then round

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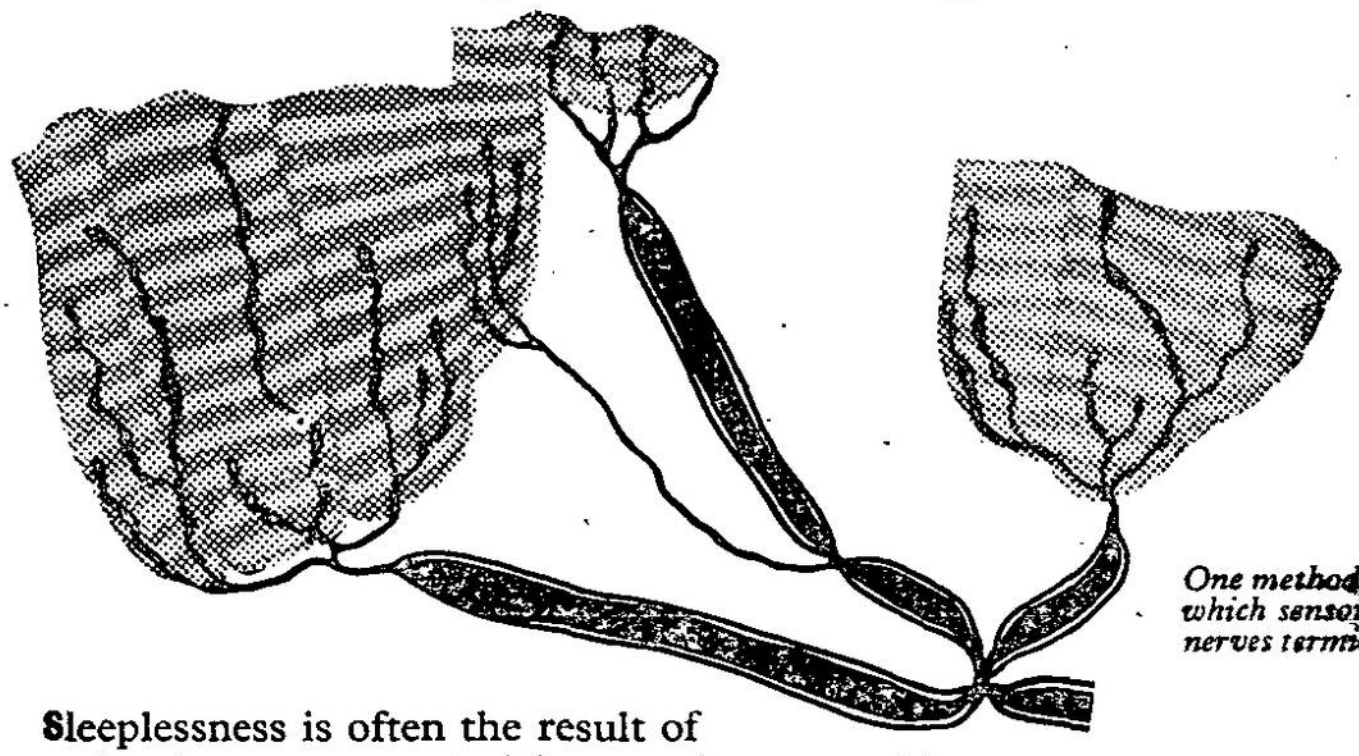

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the empty circle of the sea. Suddenly, he cried out, " We're wrong. I can't see the tea-house any more. It's disappeared over the top."

345°. They were only two hundred yards off the face of the cliff, which reared up like a great black wall. Now they could hear the scream of the birds and the dull boom of the surf. The *Fredheim* drifted on under her own way.

" Keep her on course," he shouted. Then he was stumbling up the foredeck, right into the very angle of the bows, leaning out from the jackstay, peering forward. At fifty yards, he was certain; in a surging uplift of triumph, he called back to her, " Come up here . . . quick! "

He gripped her arm tight and pointed. " Look. We're not wrong—only the bearings must have been taken from the top of the cliff. Do you see—there? That dark patch—between the two spurs? "

" It's a shadow."

" No. There's no line of surf at the foot. The water goes right in there. It's a cave."

They had to edge the *Fredheim* in. The cave was a tall, narrow crack that slanted in from the north-east and within a few feet the light changed from a grey twilight to darkness such as they had not known for a month.

He stayed in the bows, holding up the pressure lamp they had taken from the cabin, trying to guide Marianne at the wheel. The yellow rays reached out to touch the straight granite walls that soared to the shadows above them; in front, the black water heaved.

They were moving dead slow. Suddenly, the boom and echo of the exhaust cut to nothing, and as they drifted on, a new sound took its place. The hissing sigh of the Arctic Ocean as it surged along the rocks. Cold, lonely—and inexpressibly sad.

Marianne came up to the bows like a grey ghost. " It's no good. I can't see a thing. We'll have to go on in the dinghy." She stared up into the darkness. " What a fantastic place! It must be fifty feet high." Her voice echoed back, hollow and muffled.

They had stopped moving when he pulled the dinghy alongside. Then he heaved the anchor over the bows and watched the chain snaking out from the deck and through the hawse-pipe. The dull roar of it stopped suddenly as the last link jerked taut. He held the lamp over the side to see it hanging straight. It had not grounded.

" No bottom," he said, " we'll have to let her drift."

" No." She was beside him, peering down into the water. " We don't know which way the tide is—she might drift out." There was a pause and then she went on softly, half to herself. " So much to hide and so little to take. She'll be a marked boat now. You heard what he said about the police. No, we must sink her here—and now."

He stared at her. " Sink her? But how do we go on? "

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" In the dinghy, of course. Just take our things, some blankets, and food."

" But if we have to dig—what are we going to use? "

The rough edge came into her voice again. " Do you propose we go out and wander round Finnmark, asking for the loan of spades? The police would like that. All we can do now is to go on—and look."

" I'm worried about afterwards—if we find the documents," he said. " Shall we be able to carry them in the boat? And where do we go when we get out of the cave? "

" I don't think they will be so heavy—or bulky. We can hide them somewhere else until we decide what to do."

" I was thinking of the police. They will be looking for me."

She stared at him so fixedly that he lowered his eyes. " I shouldn't worry about that too much."

" Well, if we're going to scuttle her, let's do it quickly," he said uncomfortably. " At least, I know where the sea-cocks are. I found them when I was in the engine-room."

" Good. First, then, we must get the stuff into the dinghy."

It did not take long with the aid of the pressure lamp and a torch. Marianne scrambled down into the dinghy and reached up to him for the lamp. " Now go and open her up," she said.

He flashed his torch back towards the stern and stood hesitating. From behind him, her voice came, cool and taunting: " Don't you trust me—or are you afraid—of two dead men? "

" Hell, neither." He almost ran back to the wheelhouse.

The worst part was the descent of the ladder; rung by rung, facing outwards this time, with the torch steadied on the grey bulk huddled at the foot. But Graustein did not move. When he had stepped over him, it was easy to creep back past the engine and lever open the valve he had seen before. Now, above the slop of the bilge, was the deeper sound of rushing water.

When he regained the ladder, he stopped and pulled Graustein's body gently to one side, picking up the Luger that lay underneath. He went up the ladder quickly and closed the hatch.

Marianne's voice was sharp. " What have you been doing? I was getting scared. She's starting to settle."

He lowered himself to the centre thwart and pushed off from the *Fredheim* with one of the sculls. " The valve was stiff—and then I took this off Graustein." He turned to show her the Luger.

She almost snatched it away. " We are trying to hide evidence, not keep it! " There was a dull splash. " One gun is enough."

" Where is it? "

" In my pocket."

He pulled out for a few strokes and then rested on the sculls, watching the *Fredheim*. Already she was well down, settling by the stern. From behind him came Marianne's voice again. There was roughness in it.

" That's done with. For heaven's sake—get on."

In jerks, between strokes, he started talking.

There's always time for

NESCAFÉ

ANOTHER OF **NESTLÉ'S** GOOD THINGS

" I've been thinking . . . soon this should narrow. There should be some sort of a beach . . ."

" Why? Why should there be? " Again there was that edge on her voice.

" That diagram. We've thought of it only as being something on end. Why shouldn't it be a cross-section? If so, we are in the funnel part . . . and do you remember how it narrows after? And the round things that block it—they could be rocks . . ."

" What about the figure of eight beyond? "

" It's all guesswork—and I can't guess that far." Something in her tone was putting him on the defensive.

She did not answer, and he went on rowing. Suddenly, she exclaimed excitedly in Norwegian, and he stopped in mid-stroke. Then her voice came again, very softly, " That was a very good guess. There's something dead ahead."

He scrambled over the thwart and up to the bows beside her. The cave was lower and narrower; in front of them, a steep beach made of black shingle, with the tip of the sea running up it in short, angry rushes; behind that, the cave wall, rising unbroken except in one place where there was a black, round hole.

They drifted in; when the keel grated, they both jumped out and pulled the dinghy high up on the beach. Marianne lifted the lamp from the bows and walked a few yards up the slope before putting it down. " What do we want? " he called after her.

" Just the rucksack. And pull the boat a little farther up. We don't want to lose her on the tide."

When he joined her, she was crouching beyond the lamp. He could make out only the yellow fall of her hair and the pale oval of her face. Between them, the wet black pebbles shone from the ground in a circle of gleaming facets.

" That is the second time," she said.

He put the rucksack down and stared at her. " The second time—what? "

Her voice went on, without expression: " When Graustein grabbed you by the legs—you were frightened and forgot to deceive me—you spoke in fluent Norwegian. Just now, when I told you in Norsk to stop rowing—you did so at once."

He stared at his feet. " That is the only lie I have ever told you. I do know the language. I always have; my mother was Norwegian, and she taught me. It's a long time ago, but I have never forgotten."

" Why did you not tell me? "

He made a hopeless gesture with his hands. " I didn't think you would ever believe me. It would have convinced you that I was Bergman."

" *I see.*" She got up. " Well, this is no time to discuss your childhood. Take the rucksack, and I'll go ahead with the lamp. We'll find out where this hole leads—how good your *guessing* can be . . ." She was speaking Norwegian.

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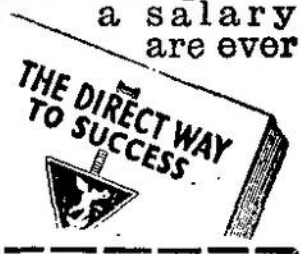

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behind her under the weight of the rucksack. The floor rose for the first few yards and then sloped down gradually. The going was rough, over boulders the size of footballs, smooth, wet, dangerous. As they stumbled and swayed, the lamp swinging from her hand, he could see them gleaming, and the bands of water dripping from the walls.

Soon the dull boom of the sea faded and there was nothing but the scrape of their boots against rock, the sound of their breath, or a whispered curse as one or other stumbled.

Marianne was moving faster and the weight of the rucksack made it hard for him to keep up; the swaying lamp moved farther away; they must be below sea level now.

He stopped to loosen the torch from his belt before he stumbled on; then he saw that the light ahead was stationary. Marianne waited while he scrambled down the last few yards to her. "The guessing continues to be good. Look."

The broken fall of ground stopped at their feet. In front and to each side, as far as the light would carry, was a sheet of black water. The utter stillness made it look like a pavement of polished marble. He bent down to feel it; it was a numbing, deathly cold. When he touched his lips with it, he found it was fresh water.

"Shine your torch out, Erik."

As the white finger of light swept over, he could distinguish the outline of smooth, straight walls slipping down into the water, and above, the vaulted dome of the roof. It was like a church, and, as in a church, they spoke in hushed voices.

"Is there anything beyond? Shine the torch straight ahead." Across the water, directly opposite, was a low arch, another opening. Beyond that, the black sheet stretched on uninterrupted. Then—it was so far the light could scarcely reach it—something long and low and white.

She let out her breath in a quiet sigh. "It's there—the white sand." Then she turned to look at him, steadily, uncomfortably. "Save the torch," she said. "We may need it."

"What do we do now?"

"Do?" She looked up from where she was fumbling with the straps of the rucksack. "Go over, of course."

"But how?"

She did not seem to hear him. "I think we're in luck. I brought this from the farm for the odds and ends that might be useful—matches, candles, string, and so on. I quite forgot about it."

She was pulling things from the flap as she spoke. At last there came out a tight-rolled cylinder of material with a tube and a valve sticking out from one corner. "They must like comfort when they go camping," she said. "It's an air mattress. It'll do to carry the torches over—and bring—the containers—back. We wade and push it."

"But it may be deep—"

"Then we swim."

When he had inflated the mattress and laid it on the water, she started to peel her shirt over her head. " Come on—don't stand there staring. We'll be cold enough in a minute, without hanging about now."

He sat on a boulder and began to unlace his shoes; looked up to find her piling her hair on the top of her head, then letting her clothes fall to the rock at her feet. Suddenly she stopped and bent down to rummage in the bottom of the rucksack. " They never forget it," she said and held up a bottle of clear white fluid. " Have some aquavit. I think we shall both need it." She pulled the cork with her teeth and tilted the bottle back in her mouth; he could see the ripple run down her throat as she swallowed.

As he took a gulp and the resinous spirit stabbed down his gullet, he was still watching her. The last film of underclothing fell away and she was standing there, so slim, straight, and pale, her body gleaming in the yellow light of the hissing lamp. Then he put the bottle on the raft, and they stepped down into the water side by side.

The cold was such that a line of deadness crept up his body from thigh to waist, nipping out at once all the glow that had been left by the aquavit. They pushed the raft from the back, very slowly, peering along the sides to where the torchlight from the raft flickered round the black hole of the second chamber.

Chest-deep . . . he looked sideways at the white gleam of her shoulders and the fan of ripples stretching out behind towards the yellow ball of the lamp, now grown so small.

" Swim, Marianne."

They struck out with their legs, holding on to the raft, and there was no bottom as they crept through the opening to the second pool. At each stroke the white shape ahead became broader, larger. Then the ground came back under their feet, they were stumbling in the shallows and pulling the raft up on a beach of pure white sand.

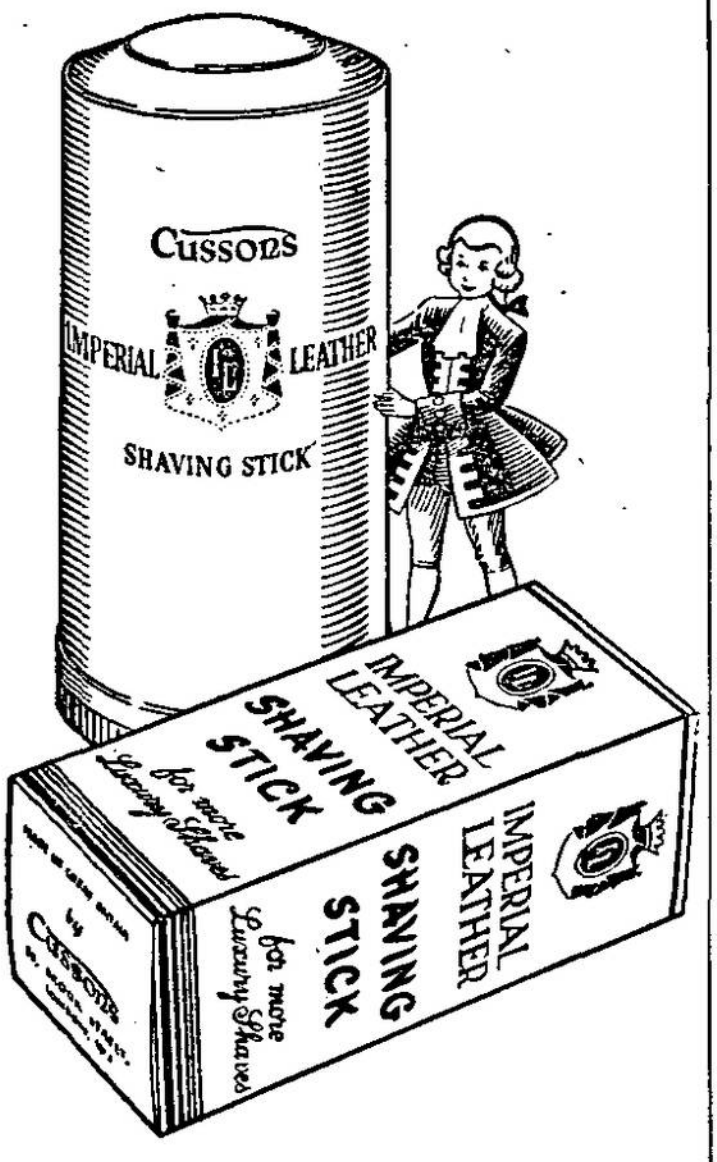
In the glow of the torches, both stood like ghosts, shrouded in a cloak of white mist as the chill water was driven off by the warmth of their bodies. He watched the coils of vapour snaking up from Marianne's back and arms as she reached down for the aquavit bottle. She took a pull and passed it to him without speaking.

Then her torch swept in widening circles over the sand. He saw the marks before she spoke: " Footprints. They come from the water—then fork in each direction. You take those to the right."

There were two sets, side by side and deeply indented; they looked as if they had been made yesterday. He followed them to the back of the beach where the smooth walls of the cave came down to seal it off, and the search was over.

The containers that held the documents were not even buried. The dull green bolted disks that sealed their ends were sticking out of the sand. There were four in all.

" Marianne! " His voice cracked and jumped an octave. " The documents are here! We've got them! "



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No answer came. He shouted again; but nothing came back save the lap of the water against the beach. He ran back where he could see the motionless light of her torch.

Marianne was kneeling, head bent and very still, staring at a long dark blur that was lying at the edge of the sand.

It was the body of a man. Blackened, half mummified, it had been there for a long time, but she stared at it, unflinching. Then she bent forward to try and straighten one of the arms. As she touched the rotting cloth, the whole thing fell away from the shoulder.

There was something in her pose as she tried to push it together —the tender, absorbed intensity of a child gathering the pieces of a broken toy—that made him know the truth. As he watched, one by one, the fragments scattered over the last weeks fell into place . . . The Professor's words about her . . . the tears when she had finished the story . . . that photograph . . . the worn wedding-ring . . .

" *Your husband* . . ." The words sprang spontaneously from his realization, but the moment they were out, he knew what damage they had done.

After a long silence, she looked up at him, very pale, dry-eyed. " Yes . . . And I must ask *you* to help me bury him."

" But—"

" *Now.*"

Throughout, he felt no fatigue, no cold—only a growing, aching sickness. Beside him, she worked steadily and in silence. Only

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when they were done, and she was smoothing down the long mound, did he notice the wedding-ring had gone from her hand.

When she spoke, she turned away from him. " You say the documents are there? "

" Yes. In four cylinders. They are not buried."

" Would you—get them up and take them to the raft? I'll be with you in a moment."

He left her in her solitude and went back to the far corner of the cave. The cylinders were heavy, so he pulled them up one by one and carried them back to the raft. While he waited for her to come, he took another gulp of aquavit, but the shaking would not stop.

Then she came into the range of his torch, a pale, slim column. She shook her head at the offer of the bottle and without a word waded into the water.

They swam and then dressed in silence. Only when they had finished did he dare to speak. It had become unbearable—that withdrawn indifference, the eyes that looked right through him each time she had to glance his way. He remembered . . . " the frozen face."

" Marianne, I'm terribly—"

For the first time she seemed to notice him. She stood there in the yellow light, combing her hair; shirt torn, trousers stained, but so very, very beautiful.

" Terribly what—? "

He made a hopeless gesture with his hands. " Sorry . . ."

She picked up the lamp. " Don't talk about it. Can you manage the cylinders if I take the rucksack and lead the way? "

Back to the dinghy and then the long pull out of the cave with Heskin rowing. The only trace of the *Fredheim* was a smear of oil on the water. As greyness started to filter in from behind him, he could see the walls with the smooth swell sliding along their base. There was a splash as the pressure lamp—the last trace of their ship—went over the side.

" Pass me up an oar," said Marianne. " I'll give you a hand with the pull-round."

As he turned he said, " Where are we going? "

" Hornvika."

It did not take long. The daylight beat down on them, too steady, too bright, and the birds wheeled overhead and screamed. Soon they were in the funnel of the bay with the cliffs rising up a full thousand feet. There was no sign of life on the rocks or the rusting, burnt-out jetty: nothing on the sea but the smudge of one fishing-boat far to the north.

They beached the dinghy, and scrambled over the rocks to a level stretch of turf beyond. At the side of the first of the steps that wound their way up out of sight to the top of the cliff was a little sheltered hollow. Marianne pointed. " That will do."

She watched in silence, arms folded, until he had brought up all their belongings and laid them on the grass. Then she said, " I'm going for a walk—I want to think."

She was going to leave him . . . take the money . . . and the police would be waiting everywhere. Some of his fear must have been mirrored in his face as he turned towards her. She kicked Graustein's battered case towards him and there was infinite scorn in her voice as she answered, " No, I'm not running off with the money. I want to be alone, that's all."

She turned on her heel and walked away.

The only thing he could do was to try and please her, so he busied himself with preparations for her return. Food—a tin of salt herrings opened and some black bread cut. Then beds, for they must have some sleep. He spread the blankets, and then knelt back, puzzled. She had brought only enough for one . . .

He did not hear the sound of her coming; only the sharp words that bit through the silence from behind him. He swung round on his knees to look up into the bright, round muzzle of the automatic, held so steady and so straight.

" I don't understand—" But deep in his mind a muffled bell had started to toll.

" So you want to play it out to the end—Erik Bergman? Oh, you are very clever—so clever that you nearly fooled me. The English bank clerk, who conjures up a Norwegian mother the first time he forgets to deceive and speaks our language . . . I might have forgiven that, but how did you know your way so surely into that cave, and *how did you know* that was my husband? "

He was silent. What was the use of trying, how could he explain intelligent guessing, little fragments of memory stored up, and the way she had looked as she knelt by the body? He knew because he was watching. And he was watching because he loved her. But it was no good . . .

Her voice went on; measured, without hate, inexorable, like that of a judge.

" I think I would have let you go—to live out your life with your own conscience—but for these two things. At first, I thought you had had no part in what happened in the cave. But that's a lie, because you *were there*, you knew today *he* would be there. *Perhaps you killed him.*"

For the first time there was a change and a little tremor of feeling came into her voice.

" Then, you made me believe you. After the *Tirpitz*—and when you were ill—I was nearly sure. I started to like you. Perhaps to feel something more. I started to hope. And all the time you knew you had done this. That cannot go on."

He did not answer, and he did not look at her face. He stared at the stiff sea grass between them, beating sideways in the breeze, and the little blue flowers nodding in time.

" So you have one minute to say your prayers. I had thought of handing you over to the police. But we are soft in this country and they would only put you in prison. The minute starts now."

Suddenly he was very tired. He thought of many things as the seconds dragged out—he remembered something his father had

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said to him long ago: "You can't take more out of life than you put in."

That was what he had tried to do.

He got to his feet, still staring at the gun, at the rim of the muzzle. He did not look at her face; he did not want to see the contempt in those violet eyes.

The muzzle was like a shining silver ring—a wedding-ring—that got bigger and brighter as he walked towards it.

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These readers who sent in the first correct solutions to be checked on the closing date, each receive a one-guinea book token.

SOLUTION

Across. 1, *Aspirate.* 5, *Tartar.* 9, *Roasting.* 10, *Divers.* 12, *Wallow.* 13, *Catacombs.* 15, *As good as gold.* 17, *Too many cooks.* 22, *Reaction.* 23, *Starch.* 26, *Idiocy.* 27, *Peshawar.* 28, *Hoyden.* 29, *Carnally.*

Down. 1, *Arrow.* 2, *Pearly.* 3, *Rations.* 4, *Tint.* 6, *Animals.* 7, *Tremolo.* 8, *Rosebuds.* 11, *Bandbox.* 14, *Corydon.* 16, *Starfish.* 18, *Opacity.* 19, *Attaché,* 20, *Kitchen.* 21, *Crewel.* 24, *Hardy.* 25, *Vera.*

PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 23

Argosy's twenty-third Prize Crossword Competition appears on page 144. There will be one-guinea book tokens for the first five correct solutions checked on the closing date. If you do not wish to cut Argosy, copy your solution on to a plain sheet of paper, adding your name and address in capital letters. Entries should be completed *in ink*, and posted to: ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD (No. 23), 3 Pilgrim Street, London, E.C.4. (Comp), to arrive by Wednesday, April 6th, the closing date. We regret that entry must be limited to readers living in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and Eire. There is no entry fee and the Editor's decision is final. Names of the prize-winners and the solution will appear in the issue of Argosy on sale June 10th.

PRIZE CROSS-WORD

No. 23

★

Rules of Entry on Page 143

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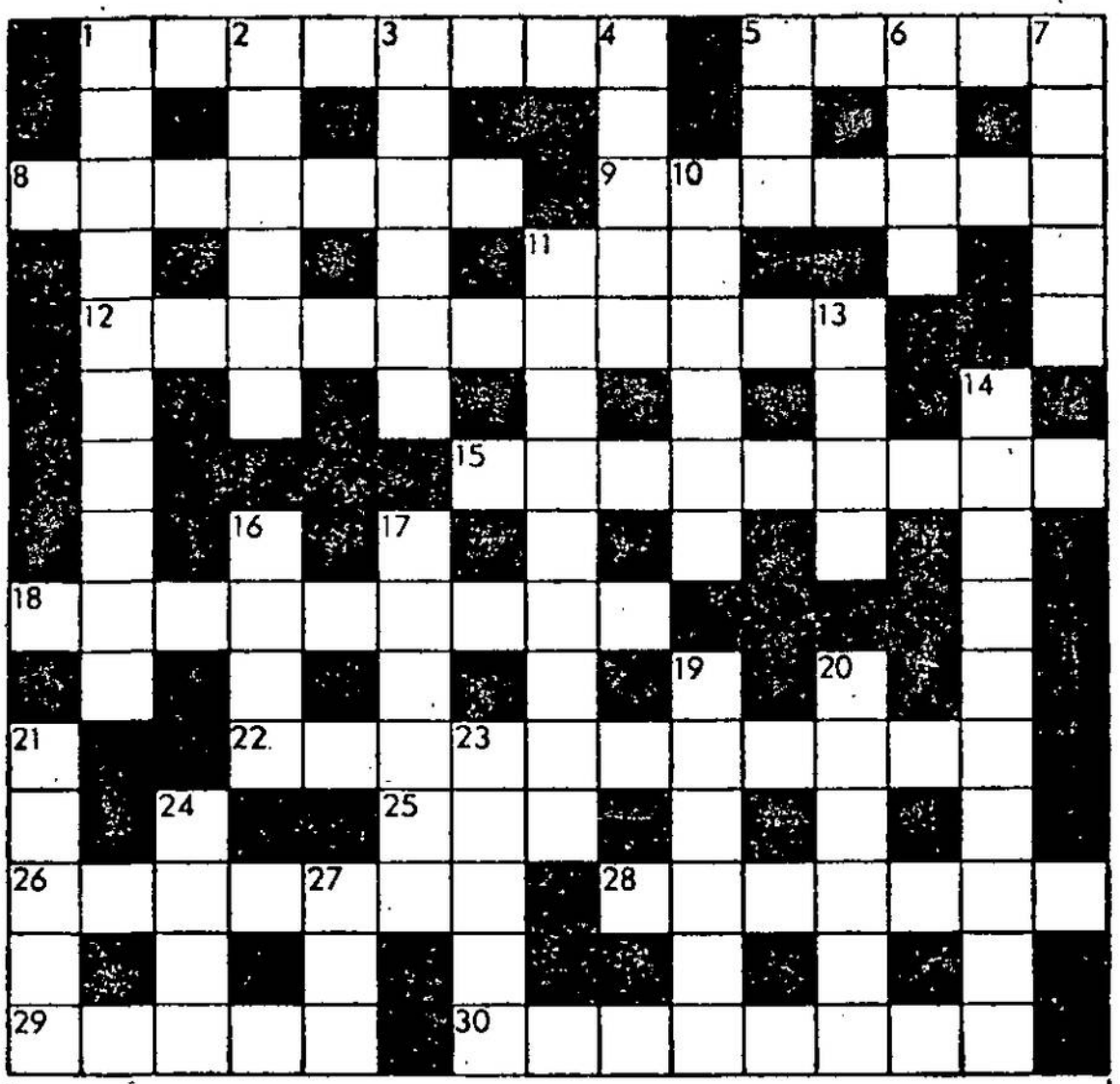

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CUT ALONG THE LINE

CLUES

Across

1 Plant a girl for a Shakespearian heroine (8).

5 Cheques, cartridges, and minds may be (5).

8 "When you were a—— and I was a fish, in the Palaeozoic time" (Langdon Smith) (7).

9 A memento of decay (7).

11 Not, apparently, on behalf of the amateur (3).

12 The king is entertained—by *Rigoletto* (2, 3, 6).

15 Where to stop when it's zero hour? (2, 7).

18 Returning—at breaking-up time, no doubt (5, 4).

22 Use your resources: mix Zoe and Peter (11).

25 Tin may be mined in the East, but some mineral wealth remains (3).

26 I'm twisted in prose to make a pledge (7).

28 Cattle seem to be in good supply (2, 5).

29 Leisure and a learner's plate equip the artist (5).

30 By these, Margaret's firmly attached to the marquee (4-4).

Down

1 He carries a heavy weight to the dance (10).

2 Former impudent specialist (6).

3 Who, and what is she? (6).

4 Panic resulting from a broken malar bone (5).

5 To be called to this does not necessarily involve the offer of a drink (3).

6 Place a bet on the river if you wish to take it literally (4).

7 This vessel sails in both directions (5).

10 No lout in France (6).

11 Am pimento—in a transformation scene (9).

13 It answers "Where?" (4).

14 Conclusions drawn from resin fences (10).

16 The stake before (4).

17 Though the graph is absent, they are still visible (6).

19 Instrument for making ice-cream? (6).

20 "I stood——upon a little hill" (Keats) (3-3).

21 The maple has made full turn (5).

23 Set upright (5).

24 This rose—from stationary stones? (4).

27 I head two fifties: very unsound (3).

-ABDULLA -

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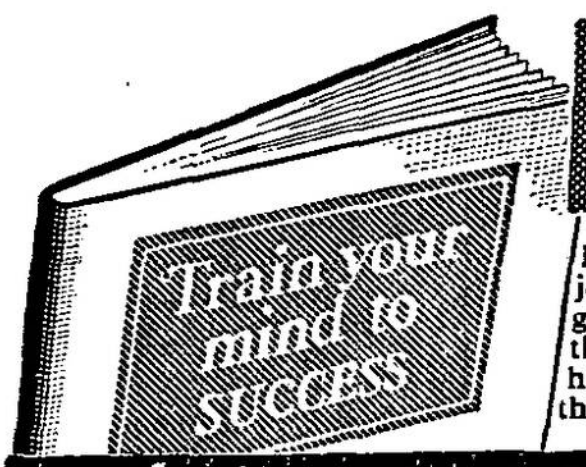

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PRACTICAL RESULTS

Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it... *Student* 778/2119: I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student* 184/315: As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN.** One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student* 181/282: You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY;** they offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student* 591/287: You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it... *Student* 120/288: I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH.** The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student* 1179/347: I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS**... *Student* 1954/157: I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD:** they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student* 171/162: I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student* 1106/156: The B.B.C. accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student* 141/76: The article which I wrote for the Second Test paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL.** Thanks for the recommendation.

Lacey.